

Small-Scale Mining on Mt. Balabag:
Examining Class Dynamics and Socioeconomic Mobility

Alexie Z.N. Felipe

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ABSTRACT

Mt. Balabag in the province of Zamboanga del Sur (Mindanao, Philippines) was the site of lucrative small-scale mining (SSM) from 1994 to 2012. This research inquires into the effect of SSM on the production of class and on capital accumulation during its operational period and beyond. The miners were a mix of indigenous Subanen and Filipino migrants who all came from rural agricultural backgrounds. There has been research implying the economic benefits of SSM to rural peoples of the Global South, and on Mt. Balabag too miners did see a significant increase in earnings relative to their previous agricultural livelihoods. However, in the long term the influx of economic capital did not translate into widespread socioeconomic mobility for the majority, or even a significant minority. When SSM came to an end in late 2012, so too did the improvements it provided to most involved.

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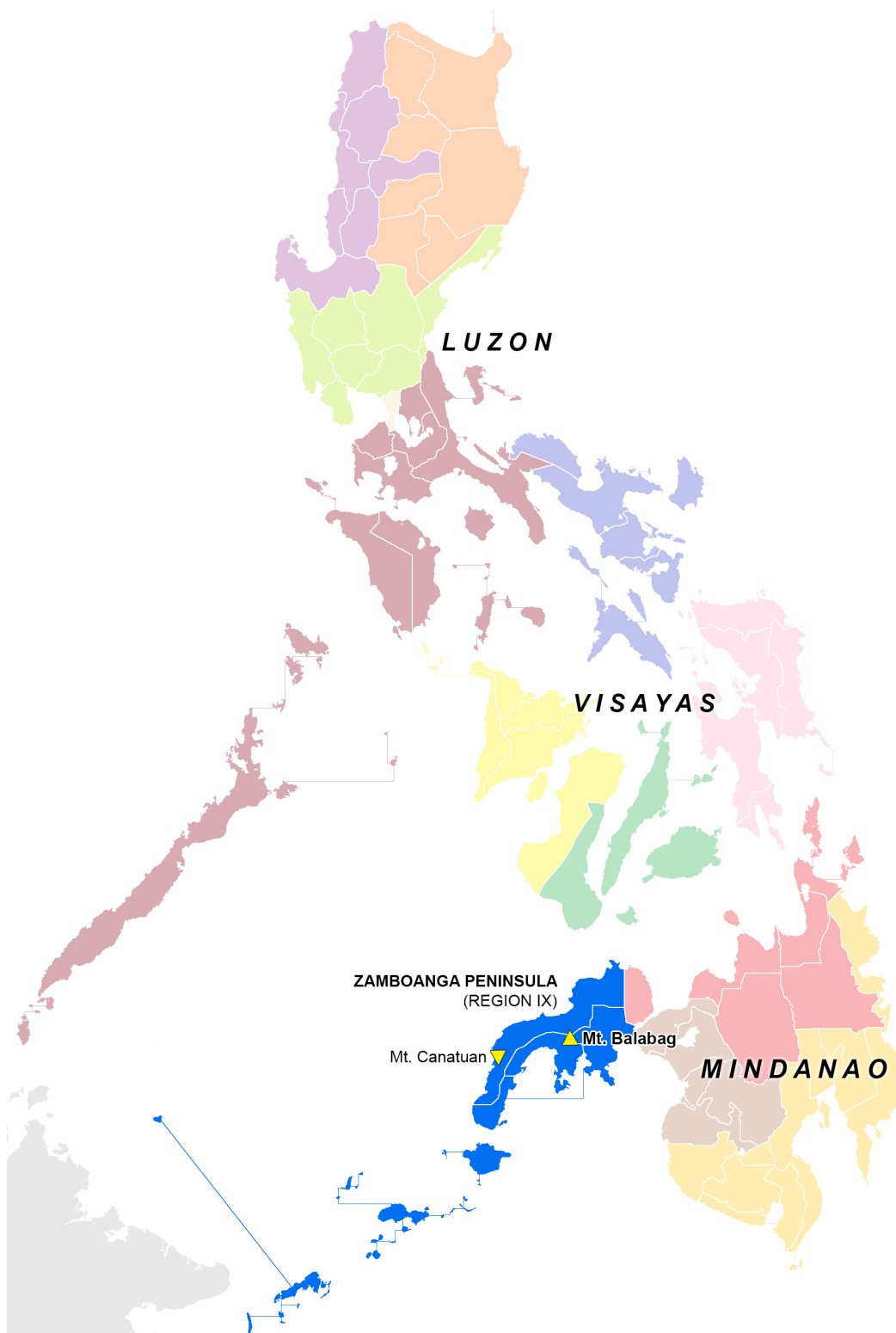


Figure 1.1: The Philippine regions. My research site was in the area around the former small-scale mining community on Mt. Balabag in Zamboanga Peninsula (Region IX) in Mindanao. Also noted on the map is Mt. Canatuan, the site of the first TVIRD large-scale mine in the Philippines.

Chapter One:
INTRODUCTION

“Nearly two years after the dismantling of illegal mining operations in the area – an initiative spearheaded by Provincial Governor Antonio Cerilles – the [local peoples, including the indigenous Subanen] now [have] clear reason to hope for the remediation of prior environmental destruction from exploitive artisanal mining and a transparent roadmap for mutual development with TVIRD.” - TVIRD statement in August 2014 (interaksyon.com)

Mining (both large-scale and small-scale) and its relationship with the local people is a difficult terrain to traverse. The above quote refers to a new mining site for TVIRD (Canadian TVI-Pacific’s Philippine subsidiary) in Balabag, Zamboanga del Sur, which was cleared of ‘illegal’ small-scale miners in the fall of 2012. In 2007, as a freelance journalist, I visited the site of TVIRDs first large scale mine in the Philippines on Mt. Canatuan, Zamboanga del Norte. There I learned first hand of the hardships faced by the local peoples in the years since small-scale mining operations were demolished in 1995 (Felipe 2008, Tuhan et al 1995:148). I learned that before the arrival of TVIRD the mountain was mined by thousands of small scale miners. I remember asking timuay Boy Anoy (“timuay” being the title of a Subanon leader) about the relationship between the small-scale miners and the Subanon. He told me that at first they were unhappy with them, that they felt that mining disrespected their culture and damaged the environment on their holy mountain. Yet after this he told me that because of the threat of TVIRD’s entry, and because small-scale mining provided livelihoods, they eventually came to an understanding. It was then that a partnership of sorts emerged between them and the local miners against what they saw as the bigger problem: the transnational Canadian company. The rationale given to me was that at least small-scale mining (SSM) provided a livelihood to the local people (including the Subanon), where large-scale mining (LSM) threatened to take this away while still desecrating their sacred mountain. I did not delve any further into this at the time as my focus then was to investigate the situation of the locals living in the shadow of the Canadian mine for the purpose of a story I was writing, but in the back of my mind I was curious about that state of affairs between the local peoples (indigenous and non-indigenous alike) and the SSM. I wondered if the people would have seen a better future if SSM had continued.

Seven years later I had the opportunity to return to the region and do my masters thesis fieldwork around the future site of TVIRD’s¹ next operation on nearby Mt. Balabag, in the province of Zamboanga

¹ TVI-Pacific, in my interviews with them, actively pushed to distance themselves from the issues of Balabag—insisting that it was now mostly a Philippine-owned operation under their local affiliate TVIRD.

del Sur. As with Canatuan this too was the former site of a small-scale mining community who were displaced, and it too was claimed as the ancestral domain of the indigenous Subanen people². Sitio Balabag³ in Bayog lies just within the 4,779 hectares claimed by TVIRD, there the community of small scale miners experienced forced displacement in the fall of 2012. Small-scale mining began there in 1994 and in the years since the population exploded to a community with an estimated 5000 involved directly or indirectly with mining operations, according to the Monte de Oro Small Scale Miners Association (MOSSMA)—the organization created by the miners in the community.

It should be noted again that though my initial interest in this situation came via the plight of the indigenous population, in this research project I focused on the aggregate population that included the indigenous and non-indigenous peoples formerly involved in small scale mining. My research questions inquired into the impact of SSM on socioeconomic mobility and its lasting long-term impacts after operations came to an end with their displacement by TVIRD. *What effect did SSM have on the production of class and capital accumulation? As the risk of a LSM takeover was always present (as the threat was there from the beginning of the SSM's existence and the events at Canatuan were well known), how did individuals strategize and implement plans for life post-Balabag? Were they able to make long term decisions to translate their socioeconomic gains from mining into post-mining socioeconomic mobility? Why or why not?*

If I were to be honest, in entering this work I expected the answer to be that local control of development was resulting in at least modest advances in three types of capital (financial, social, and cultural) for the majority. I expected to see some development of industrial and social infrastructure: the creation of road and utility networks, the creation of downstream industries, educational systems that helped prepare young people for participation in economic networks, and the development of improved housing conditions. Post-SSM I expected to see youth, who having had greater access to education, had increased cultural capital that allowed greater participation in the regional, national, and even global economies. Speaking honestly, I wanted to see this. I wanted my research to be able to proclaim that left to their own means the masses were able to take command of development.

² The Subanon and Subanen are the same tribe, but spell their names differently depending on their geographical location (there are other variations as well). This tribe makes up the majority of the population of the Zamboanga peninsula of the island of Mindanao. One major difference between the Canatuan and Balabag groups was that unlike in Canatuan the the Subanen did not have a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) from the government.

³ “Sitio” are the smallest community unit, they are hamlets that are satellites of barangays.

This generally positive outcome was one that was forwarded by Nancy Lee Peluso (2015) in her work on currently operating SSM in Indonesian Borneo⁴. In an article for the online publication *New Mandala*⁵, she wrote that “Small-scale illegal mining in West Kalimantan is... a shot at economic independence for marginalised rural people.” My work in many ways recognizes similar economic benefits during mining operations, but also recognizes the shadows SSM casts. Peluso clearly outlined the negative effects on human and environmental health as a direct result of artisanal mining. My work adds that there were also impacts on family and gender relations, indigenous rights, and social life. My work also inquires as to life after mining, as all extractive industries have a limited lifespan. My research highlights the much more ambiguous nature of the ‘economic benefits’ when seen in the long term.

THESIS OVERVIEW

Within a mixed theoretical framework that draws on different schools of Marxian and post-Marxian thought, this thesis will examine the long lasting impacts of small-scale mining in Balabag (positive and negative) for the peoples involved. Economic capital did increase for the majority and some were able to see upward mobility (including in class positions), but in the long term the end of SSM also ended this upward trajectory for the majority, with the notable exception of the elite. I will argue that in Balabag SSM did not prove itself to be a road to modernization and development. In this research I will explore the temporal and socioeconomic factors that enabled the development of new capitalist relations within “gold rush” SSM in a semi-feudal agrarian context. Whilst doing so I will examine how the capitalist system prioritized the accumulation of profit, how the form capitalism took was modelled after the semi-feudal agrarian capitalism of the countryside, and how like a Ponzi scheme the only clear long term benefits went to those who came aboard early with enough capital to establish themselves as the mining elite. The reality of SSM created limitations to the accumulation of social, cultural, and economic capital.

This created a sense of frustration that helped shape the type of culture produced. Space here is viewed as a social activity, as Lefebvre wrote, “social space is a social product” (Elden 2007:108) and the way spaces are actually lived often clash with conceptions of how life ‘should be’. Thus when increased economic wealth did not bring the opportunities many expected, it found new outlets through the projection of luxury and ‘the good life’ (as they saw it). Moving beyond the base-superstructure binary of

⁴ More literature on SSM worldwide will be discussed in chapter two.

⁵ <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2015/07/17/the-gold-farmers/>

Althusser, my research sees culture reshaped by the changes brought in by SSM. As Stuart Elden writes regarding Lefebvre's ideas on the production of space, "a social space is not a *socialised* space', that is, it did not exist beforehand as a non-social space, as a natural space, but is produced by social forces" (Elden, 2007:184).

In chapter two I delve into the theoretical underpinnings of the research and elaborate on key concepts (such as 'class' and 'capital') as well as discuss the two different general types of small-scale mining found in the Philippines. In chapter three I will discuss the methodology of my research. Chapter four will provide context for my research site within the regional, national, and global economy. Within the regional context I will discuss the opportunities for socioeconomic mobility through a exploration of regional demographics and access to educational and employment opportunities. Here too I will discuss how these issues intersect with indigenous rights. Chapter five will chronologically examine how SSM in Balabag developed, was organized, and the class dynamics found therein. Chapter six will slightly shift gears,.Where the previous chapter focused on class dynamics, in this chapter class mobility will be examined more in the vernacular sense of general well-being as perceived by the former miners (though there will be overlap of approaches in both chapters). I will ask: How did post-SSM life differ for those arriving from different class positions? How stable were the socioeconomic gains made during the SSM era? And how did various aspects of life change relative to how they lived before their involvement with mining? I will discuss livelihoods, education, home-life, and health. And finally I will provide a synthesis and conclusion in chapter seven.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE LITERATURE

This work will build on the vast literature around extractive industries and the spatial nature of capitalist growth. It inquires into class formations, class dynamics, and class mobility as produced in the transition from an agrarian, to an extractive, then back to an agrarian economy. I hope to show that the problems of social and economic underdevelopment that are usually attached to large-scale mining are also issues with mining in the smaller scale. It has become common to criticize the destructive effects of large-scale mining in the global south, and while I do not dispute this, I do believe that too often activists and even academics, forget that the problem is not necessarily restricted to large-scale mining. These transnational corporations are beholden to capitalist logic, and even on the local scale of SSM, negative effects can be an outgrowth. In this understanding I hope we will be better able to consider alternatives.

Chapter Two: **CONCEPTS AND THEORY**

This research did not begin with theory. Instead theoretical approaches emerged through the process of conducting the research. In a very real sense my approach evolved both through the course of conducting fieldwork, and through the process of writing. For example, in conducting fieldwork I realized that the information I previously had was not complete. I was under the assumption (based on the little information available) that the small-scale mining (SSM) community on Mt. Balabag was similar to those found in other indigenous sites in the country where the indigenous peoples had long had a tradition of gold mining. Thus initially I was operating primarily under the mining-induced displacement literature. This changed when I learned that the SSM site was relatively new, and that most of the miners were not originally from Mt. Balabag. I learned on site that the situation was more complex and thus I became interested in the processes that produced SSM there. It is from this that I began my inquiry into the global economy and the different scales of influence that shape it. And as my learning about Balabag SSM progressed, I began to further delve into questions regarding socioeconomic mobility.

In this chapter I will provide an overview of the different theoretical influences found in this thesis. Beginning with an exploration of the global, state, and local economies, I will then contextualize these within the small-scale mining industry. SSM in the Philippines exists in two main forms, “traditional” and “gold rush”, the two are differentiated mostly by their social and cultural underpinnings. In Balabag the latter form took hold and that, in conjunction with the semi-feudal agrarian economy of the region, helped shape class formations, class dynamics, and capital flows. And as SSM on Mt. Balabag was eventually displaced by large-scale mining (LSM), the literature on mining-induced displacement shall be summarized as elements from that body of work have relevance, especially for the small group of indigenous peoples that lived on the site previous to mining, and were permanently displaced after the TVIRD takeover.

MINING, THE PHILIPPINES, & THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

It is not only in the Philippines where this relationship between mineral wealth and underdevelopment is found. This is a common story for many nations across the global south (as well as in places within the global north as well). A wealth of natural resources has long been seen as having a seemingly inverse relationship with development. From the earliest days of theorizing on capitalism

Adam Smith warned that economies dependent on mineral rents faced perils. Rents promoted imports and led to unproductive activities, “the income of men who love to reap what they never sowed” (Karl 1999: 43). This led to an unbalanced, export based, economy which promoted the growth of a local bourgeoisie at the expense of growing other industrial sectors, resulting in long term economic weakness. This has been termed as ‘resource curse’ theory, and has been applied to a wide variety of natural resources, from the perils felt by petrol-states (Karl 1999, Watts 2009), to the Atlantic cod fishery (Rogers, 1998), to the forestry sectors in the Philippines and Borneo (Broad, 1995), to the mining of minerals, and more.

The histories of extractive economies in the West, like those in Canada (fisheries, timber, minerals) or gold-rush California, show that development is possible through the exploitation of natural resources (Walker 2010) —but only if the state is able to diversify so that it doesn’t rely on this single industry. Without this diversification the threat of ‘Dutch Disease’ looms in that the threat of inflation results from an over reliance on extractive rents without the creation of productive industries that are able to absorb surplus profit. Here the distinct geographical differences in the form ‘scapitalism takes plays a role in shaping class formations, class dynamics, and capital flows. As Michael Watts (2009) writes, the “danger is that the [resource] curse substitutes the commodity for the larger truths of capitalism, markets, and politics”. It is not simply that extraction is the cause of developmental difficulties, but that these difficulties are a manifestation of the interplay between multiscale capitalisms.

At the global scale capitalism has created a system dependent on uneven development. It divides the economic world into what Wallerstein (2004) called core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral nations, with the Philippines (and its mining industry) firmly within the latter status. At the state scale the Philippines’ unique colonial and post-colonial history has created a dominant semi-feudal form of capitalism in which an elite landowning class, who also make up the political elite, derives value primarily from rent and thus has little incentive to reinvest. And at the local scale, rural agricultural peoples find themselves at odds with state and global interests, while at the same time trying to find openings created within those scales to chart an independent path.

In this work I focus on the actions at the local level, on how class is produced in the transformation from an agrarian to an artisanal mining economy. Though I see it as highly influenced by the global and state level scales, the local scale is not viewed as the direct result of a top down scalar hierarchy but is instead a fundamental mechanism and process that connects all scales. As Erik Swyngedouw (1992) writes, “space is about social relations, and... spatial properties are constructed in and through a myriad of social processes unfolding at various social levels and geographical scales” (417). Swyngedouw’s work on scale helps inform the ways in which nature and society interpenetrate and “are

constituted as networks of interwoven processes”, and shows “how the social and physical transformation of the world is inserted in a series of scalar spatialities.” The resulting networks are seen as “deeply localized” and at the same time expansive in how it interconnects global and local configurations (Marston et al, 2005:418).

THE GLOBAL SCALE

Neil Smith defines uneven development as “the systematic geographical expression of the contradictions inherent in the very constitution and structure of capital” (Smith 2008:3). Capitalism is a system perennially at risk (Harvey 1985:315) and survival is dependent on the maximization of surplus value from living labour through production, thus requiring a steady influx of the cheapest possible raw materials formed into products by the cheapest possible labour. This creates a value chain that over the course of history created a divide of ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ between states. This global divide results from capital’s internal contradictions that create a cyclical pattern of boom and bust. Internal contradictions are inescapable elements of capitalist accumulation which eventually lead to what Harvey (1985, 1989) calls a crisis of overaccumulation. This occurs when the surpluses in labour and capital that capitalism relies on can no longer be absorbed by the economy.

Surplus capital and surplus labor power exist side by side with apparently no way to bring the two together to accomplish socially useful tasks. The irrationality that lurks at the heart of a supposedly rational mode of production comes to the surface for all to see (Harvey, 1985: 315-316).

The Marxist argument is, then, that the tendency toward overaccumulation can never be eliminated under capitalism. It is a never-ending and eternal problem for any capitalist mode of production. The only question, therefore is how the overaccumulation tendency can be expressed, contained, absorbed or managed in ways that do not threaten the capitalist social order (Harvey 1989: 181).

The system cannot ever overcome this problem, it can merely postpone its emergence. This is accomplished by moving the risk around geographically—techniques known as spatial fixes. Corresponding to the above, they take these basic forms (Das, 2009: 378):

- 1) The ecological problems can be geographically relocated away from the centres of global capital.

- 2) Those outside the capitalist economy can be brought in through a variant of primitive accumulation.
- 3) Like with the environment, labour from a different geographical location can help alleviate costs and boost profits.
- 4) Overaccumulation can also be temporarily alleviated through movement in space, this is what Harvey calls a “spatial fix.”

This ‘spatial fix’ is at the heart of the Philippines’ role in the global economy: that of being primarily a supplier of raw goods (historically organic goods like timber and agriculture, but more and more turning towards minerals), and a raw supplier of cheap labour⁶ (Rodriguez 2011).

THE STATE SCALE

On the scale of the Philippine state, capitalism inherits elements of the feudal system imposed by the Spanish colonizers⁷ and entrenched into political networks during the American colonial period. Philippine capitalism in the countryside takes on what Philippine activists call a “semi-feudal” nature (Aguilar 1989, Putzel 1995). Large landowners make up the dominant elite and control both political and economic interests subordinated to foreign capital. In this form of agricultural production the vast majority of arable land is owned by a small number of landlords and is tilled primarily by peasants. “Semi-feudal” production is marked by its reliance on manual labour over the use of modern technologies. Elite power is based on their serving as rent extracting middle-men between foreign capital and the exploited Filipino classes (Guerrero 1970), and a system of patronage that ties the elite and their clients in vertical ties of reciprocity. The Philippine state tends to lean towards supporting LSM over SSM towards this end.

As with how on a global scale the Philippines is a peripheral nation, on a national scale the archipelago itself is broken up into urban cores (centred on Manila) and rural peripheries (like my research site on Zamboanga peninsula). Mining interests tend to be located in the peripheries, often in areas once considered undesirable, which by no coincidence are often areas populated by indigenous peoples. By entering these lands mining interests (whether large or small-scale) tend to reenact forms of Marx’s

⁶ Global labour is not a major interest in this thesis, but it can be seen in some interviews with parent of former miners who hope their college educated children can find work overseas as an alternative to the poor work opportunities found in the region.

⁷ Technically, feudalism first entered the archipelago a century previous to the Spanish with the arrival of the Muslim sultanates, but their reach was far more limited (Guerrero, 1970: 81).

primitive accumulation through the privatization of indigenous common lands. The original primitive accumulation was part of Marx's theory of historical materialism which sought to explain the early days of capitalism when the commons were occupied by capitalist interests. This released the labour power of peasants into the work force creating the proletariat class (Marx, *Capital*, Part VIII, Chapter XXVI). In today's economic climate Harvey builds on the concept with his theory of *accumulation by dispossession*. "This occurs as capitalism (seeking new sources of raw materials and new markets for manufactured products) opens up new fields for capital accumulation in domains hitherto regarded [as] off-limits to the calculus of profitability" (Harvey 2006: 153). Unlike primitive accumulation, this process is not limited to capitalism's historical beginnings, but is a continuous process where the system continuously finds ways to privatize what was once part of the commons (with a reach that extends beyond common land to areas including culture). Zamboanga peninsula (and other places like it) have been known to be mineral rich for some time now, but it was only after a series of economic crises in the late twentieth century that extraction in such a remote and underdeveloped area shifted towards profitability. However, before LSM could enter, local capitalists were the first to act.

THE LOCAL SCALE

While the global and state-level scales clearly have powerful effects on the local scale, no one of those scales can be privileged as determining the shape of economic spaces. David Harvey wrote, "concepts of space and time and the practices associated with them are far from socially neutral in human affairs" (Harvey 1990: 424). Drawing on the idea that space is produced (Lefebvre 1991), space here is seen as relative, and as a component of the relations of production, space as both social and spatial. As Philip Kelly writes, "space is assumed to be fixed and neutral... But embodied as it is in ideas of private property, precise boundaries, colonial settlement and legal control over the body, this concept of absolute space has become historically established as "the premise of hegemonic social practices" (1997:153).

Following ideas discussed in Kelly's 1997 paper "Globalization, Power and the Politics of Scale in the Philippines" issues of scale, from the global, to the national, and the local, will be seen as nested—with each scale being influenced and influencing each other. Steven Bunker (2003), in his study on the Amazon, proposes that local level actions "particularly as manifest in the materio-spatial features of production" help shape and organize the world system. Gold mining in Zamboanga Peninsula is a modern practice with no pre-twentieth century indigenous precedent unlike in the Cordillera region in the north of the country. What happened with SSM on Mt. Balabag was the result of this nested interplay between scales. On the global scale, the renewed global profitability of the extractive industries in the neoliberal

period opened up opportunities for transnational companies through what Harvey calls the ‘spatial fix.’ However this also opened up opportunities on the local scale where people on the margins of capitalism made an attempt to try to improve their socioeconomic situation through the establishment of SSM. On the national scale the Philippine state, a peripheral state within the discourse of globalization, acts as a node in the global capitalist network—thus providing preferential treatment to LSM. And as shall be discussed in the body of this work, the impact of SSM in local areas were showing hints of changes in the way global capital will conduct extractive operations in the Philippines in the future.

SMALL-SCALE MINING IN THE PHILIPPINES

Where then does small-scale mining (SSM) fit into this bigger picture? And what is considered SSM in the Philippine context? As my research interests revolve around how mining helps or hinders community level socioeconomic development I am interested in how a small scale mine is organized: how the relationship between the extraction process, the wealth it generates, and the community intersects with the mining community that springs up around it. Using the mine site typology of the Cordillera People’s Alliance (CPA) I will contrast the “traditional” mining of other Philippine indigenous communities, with that of “gold rush” sites like that found in Balabag before its demolition by TVIRD. Whereas the government’s classifications are based on the types of mining technologies, this distinction between “traditional” and “gold rush” is more economic, social and cultural in nature. As such, it is important to recognize that these “traditional” characteristics are generalized and in a constant process of evolution as they now operate within an overall economic system different from their origins.

The CPA is the Philippines’ largest grassroots organization of indigenous peoples. Founded in 1984, they focus on the “igrot⁸” tribes of the Cordillera mountains of Luzon but also speak out on national issues affecting indigenous communities. I spoke with their representatives in Baguio City in August 2014.

Gold mining has a long history in some parts of the Philippines (mostly in the Cordillera mountains of Luzon) which pre-date Spanish colonialism (Canilao 2011; Rovillos et al. 2003). As Holden and Jacobson note, “by the third century AD Chinese traders were referring to the island of Luzon as *Lusong Dao* (the island of gold) and by the 14th century AD the Chinese were trading with Filipinos for crudely smelted copper (Holden & Jacobson 2007: 159).” However, in my particular research site, gold

⁸ “Igorot” is the collective term used to group the different tribes found in this region. This is in contrast to the term “lumad” which is the collective term for all indigenous tribes found on the island of Mindanao.

mining is a modern phenomenon that only began in the post-independence years after the Second World War. It is useful to briefly compare the differences between what the CPA calls “traditional” and “gold rush” sites as even in areas with a long history of mining, changes have been occurring and new SSM sites are not necessarily following the traditional methods.

[What we call “traditional” SSM] needs to be part of the community and its traditional systems, this has been [our] way for thousands of years... Today it is under threat as financiers are ruining the role of indigenous systems and the elders there. The traditional [profit] sharing system is being eroded, for example if a big discovery of ore is discovered, traditional SSM is obligated to share this with the entire community... if it’s a very very big find then they have to kill animal, usually a cow, as thanksgiving for all. Now this is disappearing and being replaced by a profit driven concept (CPA interview, Aug 2014).

This notion is further elaborated in a paper by the grass-roots organization *Samahan ng Nagtataguyod ng Agham at Teknolohiya para sa Sambayanan*⁹ (AGHAM):

Traditional mining is evident in mining communities of some of our indigenous peoples, like the Kankana-ey and Ibaloy communities of Benguet who have been mining for the past 400 years. Their mining methods are unique and have been handed down for generations. Traditional communities also have their own intra- and inter-community sharing mechanisms ensuring the subsistence of all community members. This acts as a coping mechanism for the inherent uncertainties and risks of mining. It allows miners who found minimal gold or elders who are unable to work, to have a share of ore, concentrate or tailings, on the condition that they will do the same once luck turns to their side. Mostly, the elderly and other community members with high esteem are prioritized in this sharing. This practice is so ingrained in their culture, that they have already built spiritual justifications for it, which at the same time, fosters this practice (Rey and Saturay 2005:10).

Traditional SSM is defined as sites that maintain links not only to pre-colonial methods, but also to pre-colonial (pre-capitalist) relations of production. Now of course all mining in the Philippines exists within the greater capitalist economy so it cannot be argued to exist wholly out of that mode of production. However elements of community “ownership” and control remain and these are thus a part of the profit

⁹ “*Advocates of Science and Technology for the People*” is an organization... of patriotic, pro-people science and technology advocates, bonded together by a common interest of promoting science and technology that genuinely serve the interest of the Filipino people, especially the poor” (www.gham.org/cms/content/about-gham).

redistributed to community members in need, and are not monopolized by a specific group of ‘owners’. Further, who is allowed to mine in productive tunnels and for what amount of time is controlled by community elders, as is the size of the mine operation and its waste management. In these sites the community tends to have come first (historically) before the advent of profit driven mining.

The CPA and AGHAM contrasts this with “gold rush” sites that are popping up in the Cordillera.

For example if in one area a gold deposit is discovered then people from everywhere come, there they set up a new culture, they set up drinking houses, karaoke, an individualist mentality... They put up a hole here, a hole there [mining tunnels]. There is no more solidarity, only individual interest. ...a gold rush is an area with a mix of different people from different tribes, there is a loss of the original culture (CPA interview, Aug 2014).

The gold-rush type of mining is done by individuals who surged to a mineral-rich area to mine, after being attracted by the lucrative character of gold and stories of quick wealth. Such individuals are usually without capital and common ethnicities or cultures. ...the “get-rich quick” mentality of miners and their cultural diversity, unbound by traditional thinking and superstitions may explain why this type of mining appears to be more disorganized and less environmentally sound than traditional small-scale methods (Rey and Saturay 2005:12).

In these sites the mine came before the community, like in gold rush sites in the Americas, and the discovery of gold was what prompted the relocation of people to build mining towns. Here the profit motive is the prime mover, and the spaces produced facilitate this goal. I am representing “space” in this sense as the series of connections (flows) through which the social and natural world interact (Thrift 2003). This includes how commodity chains and capital flows shape societies and (at a smaller scale) local communities.

“Gold rush” mining in the Philippines (and specifically in my site on Mt. Balabag) will be explored through the lens of being a product of historical conditions—not only the coming of capitalism, but also the specific ebbs and flows of global capital’s needs in the Philippines that opened up the possibility for SSM profits in the period when LSM declined in the country. The present period of increased mineral value in the market has led to a scramble from both LSM and SSM to profit from extraction. Both types of SSM are embedded within the capitalist mode of production, but they represent two different ways capitalism can be enacted. In this thesis I will explore how the ‘gold rush’ type,

influenced by rural semi-feudalism, can affect local level class formations, motivations, and capital flows within the transformation of Balabag from agrarian-based production to extraction.

SMALL-SCALE MINING WORLDWIDE

Small-scale mining (SSM), or artisanal mining¹⁰, exists in at least 80 countries and is an increasingly important form of livelihood especially for the peoples of the Global South (Villegas et al 2012:9). Estimates for those involved in this industry have more than doubled since the beginning of the millennium, from approximately 10 million (as per the International Labour Organization in 1999), to between 20 and 30 million¹¹ in 2013 (Buxton 2013:3). Much of the literature I reviewed for this thesis tended to have a positive outlook regarding the links between SSM and development (Jennings 1999; Hentschel et al 2002; Peluso 2015, Villegas et al 2012).

ASM is pivotal in alleviating poverty, increasing community capital and diversifying the local economy in many rural regions of the developing world, primarily because it is viable in areas with minimal infrastructure where other industries could not function (Villegas et al 2012:20).

Yet there was also a seemingly minority view that SSM often led to what Gavin M. Hilson called a “poverty trap” (Hilson 2012). “The Socio-Economic Impacts of Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining in Developing Countries” (2005), a book edited by Hilson, collected essays that described different facets of this ‘trap’. His thesis (and the general theme of the book) was that *“despite providing higher wages than comparative rural sectors of industry, artisanal and small-scale mining is generally associated with a deteriorated quality-of life”* (Hilson 2005: xxii).

These contrasting points of view both agree that in terms of earnings, SSM improved on what was otherwise generally available for the world’s rural poor. However, for Hilson and his colleagues, that alone did not preclude a ‘deteriorated quality-of life’. As Sergio Castro wrote in that same volume,

¹⁰ In this thesis I tend to use the term “small-scale mining” or its abbreviation “SSM” as that is the preferred term in the Philippines. When I do use “artisanal” mining I am using it as a direct synonym.

¹¹ This figure is estimated to include up to 50 percent women and 10 percent children (Buxton 2013:3).

From a socioeconomic point of view, SSM presents high indexes of poverty; few possibilities in the areas of education, health, and labor alternatives; and a cultural mining tradition in which movement to other activities is not auspicious in the short term (Castro 2005:703).

Further, both camps also agreed that in general SSM has had significant social impacts, and a poor human and environmental health record. The health, safety, and environmental practices (e.g. the use of mercury and other toxins, unsound waste disposal, etc.) were seen to have dire impacts for the “water, soil, air, the natural environment, and human life” (Castro 2005:702). The World Wildlife Fund’s 2012 report added that SSM was “also a serious and growing threat to biodiversity and the integrity of protected areas”—while at the same time speaking of “the potential for SSM to help with development and education” (Villegas et al 2012:9).

The resulting contrasts regarding SSM and development highlight the need to be able to differentiate the mobility indicators used by theorists so as to understand how even when in general agreement regarding some base figures, their conclusions can still diverge. In this research I use Philip Kelly’s four dimensions of class (position, process, performance, and politics) as the starting point for this analysis (Kelly 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). This is complemented with an analysis of how class dynamics impacted class mobility during and after SSM. In using this framework I will distinguish between improvements in financial earnings and/or capital investments, from social and cultural impacts.

CLASS FORMATION, CLASS DYNAMICS, & CAPITAL FLOWS

Small scale mining on Mt. Balabag transformed the agrarian based economy of the region to one based on artisanal extraction. It reshaped the landscape not just in the literal sense, but also socially. Tania Li (2014) in her recent book “Land’s End” discusses the production of class relations within an indigenous agrarian context. Similarities can be found in my own research regarding mining capital within SSM. Li applies a series of questions to her analysis “who owns what, who does what, who gets what, and what do they do with it—[these are] indispensable tools for making sense of rural livelihoods [2014:6].” These questions outline the importance of economic flows in analyzing class mobility. The introduction of small-scale mining brought with it new livelihood opportunities that gave agricultural workers the possibility of upward class mobility and new forms of cultural, social, and economic capital accumulation. The concept of ‘class’ in this thesis will be defined in a myriad of ways, from the conventional Marxian terms that relate it to the structure of land ownership and related productive assets (bourgeoisie, proletarian, peasant, landlord, etc.), to wider theorizations that incorporate its intersections

with various cultural, social, and financial flows as incorporated into Philip Kelly's four dimensions of class (Kelly 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). The ways in which these dimensions of class "*position*", class "*process*", class "*performance*" and class "*politics*" emerged within SSM will be employed to examine social mobility both during and after the lifespan of Balabag SSM.

CLASS AS POSITION

Class-as-position is closest to the common usage of the term and refers to where an individual (or household) is located within a stratified hierarchical order of unequal income, wealth, and access to resources. Weberians use this hierarchy as a lens from which to understand future life chances for those within each group. In the Marxian tradition one's position relative to the means of economic production determines one's role within capitalism's abstract totality. Both views see class as the objectively classifiable positions individuals occupy within the social structure (Kelly 2012c:156). This dimension of class is employed to highlight differentials in living conditions, and though it implies the nature of class relationships, it does not on its own explain the social processes that put individuals into these categories or how class affects their economic lives (Kelly 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). A further critique points to how this focus tends to ignore other axes of differentiation (e.g. race and gender) which can limit useful analysis.

In my work I will be employing aspects of both the Marxian and Weberian traditions in that I am interested both in the production and reproduction of one's position within the means of production, as well as whether economic class can predict future life chances and quality of life. I ask: who owned what; who controlled what; what kind of work the people did (previous to, during, and after SSM); and how were they able to transition from one era to the next?

CLASS AS PROCESS

Class-as-position implied class relationships, class-as-process tackles these relationships directly. It addresses the creation of value through the labour process, and how this value is then appropriated, distributed, and circulated between groups.

Differentiation in this way is based on whether labour power is commodified and sold, what type of labour relation ensues, and the relative benefit to the buyer and seller of labour power

involved in the transaction. Studies of the rural Philippines have generated a variety of class groupings by applying this conception of class, usually comprising landowners, tenant farmers, agricultural labourers, white collar workers and craftsmen/entrepreneurs (Kelly 2012b:232).

In Marxian theory class is derived from the labour process and the dynamics between the groupings, including the antagonisms based on labour struggle.

My research will analyze how class-as-process manifested in the relations between different groups within the SSM labour process—and if these different groups necessarily were the same as economic groupings within the means of production. If other groupings existed, what other factors affected these class processes?

CLASS AS PERFORMANCE

Class-as-position and class-as-process both approach class on economic terms, while class-as-performance stresses the performative elements. In this dimension, the subjective elements that may sometimes seem to be inconsistent with the abstractions of position and process are analyzed. Here class is seen to be culturally embedded and thus is “expressed and performed in cultural terms, and new class processes now lead to new ways of articulating class distinctions” (Kelly 2012a:54). Kelly broadly identifies two manifestations of this dimension, *classed consumption* and *classed performances/class as embodiment*. The former may relate to the kinds of consumption that are seen to relate to a person’s class in the productive sphere (e.g. the clothes worn by the labouring class compared to those of a Filipino overseas worker in her return to the Philippines). The *type*¹² of consumption marks an individual as belonging to a particular class category. Classed performances/class as embodiment, on the other hand, refers to how the performance of class is embodied corporeally. For example, how race and gender are implicated and can limit one’s class potential (i.e. limitations to the access of class positions/processes).

In my research racialization, especially as seen in the distinction between Filipino Christian settlers in Mindanao and indigenous peoples such as the Subanen, were a prominent example of how class-as-performance was embodied. Another example was that of residential architecture and interior decorations, which often spoke to the achievements of the household. Kelly also notes spatial aspects, that there are geographical and historical contingencies to the intersections of class and other axes of

¹² Kelly contrasts this with the level of consumption that is influenced by class seen as position (Kelly 2012a:57).

differentiation (Kelly 2012c: 160-61). In examining the story of SSM on Balabag I sought to understand not only how mining affected individuals economically, but also in how their performance of class (seen through consumption patterns and embodied forms of capital) changed over time. And in going beyond position- and process-based approaches to class I incorporated Pierre Bourdieu's insights that divided 'capital' into three forms: economic, cultural, and social.

Bourdieu wrote in his landmark analysis of the forms of capital (1986¹³) that the "social world is accumulated history... [and] one must reintroduce into it the notion of capital and with it, accumulation and all its effects." By this he meant that capital is the result of accumulated labour, and that this goes beyond simply money or materials used in production. The ownership and application of capital is what makes success or failure more than a game of chance or a question of individual merit. He writes that it "is in fact impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory". To this he divides capital into three "guises":

- 1) *Economic* capital: This is the form most commonly presented in economic theory. Institutionalized in the form of property rights, it is capital as money or directly convertible to money.
- 2) *Cultural* capital: Often institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications, this may be converted to economic capital given the right conditions.
- 3) *Social* capital: Institutionalized in the form of social titles, this is made up of one's social ties ("connections") to socially powerful or influential individuals or institutions and thus it too can be converted to economic capital given the right conditions.

Long term socioeconomic outcomes from SSM in Balabag will be seen to have strong ties to (though not determined by) an individual's ownership of all three forms of capital. I shall explore how these few "successes" (in terms of rising above their previous socioeconomic station) had a certain mental disposition (an "embodied state"), understanding and ownership of cultural goods that signified a level of bourgeois class standing (an "objectified state"), and the formal educational qualifications (an "institutionalized state") that make up cultural capital. Their pre-SSM financial capital also provided a cushion for the economic risks required for success. Though all of this would be for naught if not for the networks their social capital gave them access to not only for loans, but for insider knowledge and access. Those less one or more of these capitals, were seen to struggle—even considering the increase in economic capital that SSM provided.

¹³ No page number is provided as this document was accessed from the internet: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm>

Though of course these alone were not enough, as Bourdieu fastidiously repeats “certain conditions” are necessary to convert social and cultural capital into greater economic capital, as the few small business owners did who eventually rose up to join the regional bourgeois elite. I will argue that one of these conditions, is temporal. *When* a potential new bourgeois player entered the scene in Balabag was one of the keys to long term success. In this research I will explore these temporal and social factors that enabled the development of new capitalist relations within “gold rush” SSM in a semi-feudal agrarian context.

CLASS AS POLITICS

Class-as-politics rounds out the forth dimension of Kelly’s conception of class. It refers to how individuals may come to forge collective interests and in so doing become political entities. These may “respond to, and articulate, the experiences of class, whether positional, processual or performative” and may result with or without personal common experiences (Kelly 2012a:58). Where a traditional Marxian analysis posits a politics based on labour struggles, in this multi-dimensional view class politics may have different (and even conflicting) directions—even within a single individual. For example, one’s positional class may lead to a class consciousness as a reaction to class positioning, whereas one’s performative class may not imply class politics at all. In my work I inquire as to the ways Balabag SSM created political forms of struggle, and on what basis did they find their unity.

IMPORTANT FEATURES IN THESE CONCEPTIONS OF CLASS

In this multi-dimensional typology the structural nature of class is understood as constitutive and as enabling/limiting factors that shape a subject’s personal understanding of the world. Individuals are viewed as an interplay between multiple factors which can manifest in multiple class experiences. And how these individuals understand and navigate class will thus be given more importance in their formation of meaning and their agency within the world. Further, spatial and temporal contingencies will be seen to play a role in the formation of class dynamics. As Kelly notes, space can also be seen as “problematizing class and acting as a constitutive element in its construction” (Kelly 2012c:163).

By breaking up the concept of class into multiple dimensions Kelly posits four analytically beneficial implications (Kelly 2012a:56). Firstly, by freeing analysis from the need to aggregate class

groupings we no longer have to assume a “commonality of interests, processes, and outcomes”. Secondly, individual interests can be seen to be multi-dimensional, “a person may simultaneously participate in several class processes, holding multiple and contradictory class interests”. Thirdly, through the emphasis on the process, axes of difference play a role in differentiating competing interests. In an example provided by Kelly that will be seen to be influential in my field site, where “individuals from a particular ethnic group... find themselves disproportionately represented in deeply exploitative employment relationships, then a class process is being constituted through the construction of another form of difference”. And finally, ‘class’ in this conception “need not be limited to capitalist processes” as the process of class is concerned with the nature of the labour relationship itself.

MINING-INDUCED DISPLACEMENT

My research also explores the impact of the TVIRD takeover of Mt. Balabag which put an end to SSM. This resulted in the displacement and resettlement of indigenous and non-indigenous community members. ‘Resettlement’ for most meant returning to their home communities, many never fully relocated to Balabag and only saw it as a place of work, leaving their families behind. The exception here is the small population of original Subanen residents who were forced to find new homes after the TVIRD land claim took effect in the fall of 2012. The framework of *development-induced displacement* (DID) and *mining-induced displacement and resettlement* (MIDR) elaborate on some of the commonalities experienced by communities after the entry of large-scale projects. Economic development of the type brought by foreign LSM companies come packaged with a fundamental dilemma: while claiming to improve the lives of local people (e.g. through better environmental standards, tax contributions, and corporate social responsibility), the displacement that results often exacts a socioeconomic and cultural/psychological toll. Displacement also affects the possible life choices of the affected (Hobbs & Bose, 2004:5). Further their need to relocate often has negative ramifications, known as *the resettlement effect*:

Fifty years of research has shown that development-induced displacement is likely to unleash widespread changes... [that] include multi-dimensional impoverishment, the loss of homes, communities, productive land, income-earning assets, subsistence, community-shared resources, and cultural sites. The non-material impacts may be even greater, including human rights violations, deep fractures in social structures, networks and ties; threats to cultural identity and health; and destruction of social capital. From the perspective of this conference, women, children and the elderly are particularly vulnerable to the resettlement effect. The loss of social capital is particularly serious, as it diminishes the society’s capacity to withstand non-project

related threats (Downing, 2007:1-2).

Chapter Three: METHODOLOGY

My research was conducted in the barangays and sitios of the municipalities of Diplahan and Bayog where most of the displaced Balabag miners returned after the end of small-scale mining in the autumn of 2012. Mt. Balabag lies near the boundaries of these two municipalities in Region IX, Zamboanga Peninsula, on the island of Mindanao (Philippines).



Figure 1.2: Zamboanga Peninsula (Region IX) and its municipalities.

My history with the issue of TVI mines in Zamboanga province as a freelance journalist covering Canadian mining in the Philippines, and my long association with Filipino social justice groups, provided the basis of my foothold in the field. Months before my arrival to Zamboanga peninsula I reached out to people's organizations working in the area as well as to MOSSMA. Unfortunately, MOSSMA never returned my emails during that period, but this in part may be due to the formal dissolution of the organization. My efforts to reach out to social justice groups did yield fruit and a local organization did accept my appeal for partnership in our mutual works. Their assistance provided an entry point into the issues of former Balabag SSM residents and helped connect me to affected local peoples. This initial contact was AdPeace, a chapter of InPeace Mindanao which focuses on Zamboanga peninsula. InPeace Mindanao is a grassroots, inter-faith, and multi-sectoral peace movement. Their main interests focus on human rights, specifically on extreme human rights violations especially in areas affected by foreign industry.

While our interests did not fully match, there was a significant intersection as AdPeace focused on large scale mining and the social justice issues found therein. We had enough in common to be able to assist each other in our respective research. They had contacts within the region and knew of the general issues caused by TVIRD's entry into Balabag, and they also were able to assist with language issues (more on this will be discussed later). As a local NGO, security was a key concern they brought to the table as violence remains an issue for many who were considered 'activists' in large-scale mining regions in the country (and for activists in general)¹⁴. Their assistance in helping me secure local contacts was invaluable in ensuring that I conduct my fieldwork safely. Further we were in constant contact throughout the process which meant an outside party was always aware of my current whereabouts. My presence, as international researcher, was also a boon to their work as it allowed them access to communities with less threat of harassment by local officials.

My goal was to examine class dynamics during and after SSM operations in Balabag, and to trace their impacts on class mobility. The research was conducted primarily via the use of semi-structured interviews, but also through the collection of official documents and limited participant observation. There were methodological challenges that needed to be overcome: from issues of security, language, trust, positionality and power, to what could be understood as ontologically 'real/true' in their recollection of life within SSM, and the practical problem of locating the former miners who had been displaced from Balabag in the final months of 2012.

¹⁴ Human rights organization "Karapatan" in its 2014 year-end report claimed that the state was responsible for "the persecution of many activists and non-activists alike" (Karapatan 2015).

NEGOTIATING ISSUES OF POSITIONALITY & POWER

My positioning in this research was of key importance to me. I understand that the production of knowledge is truly a co-production between the researcher and the participants and thus the background of the researcher, my theoretical frame, my positionality, and my life experiences play a role in the kind of work that was produced. There is no objective observer, there is no impartial viewpoint. Who I was shaped who I am, and that shapes what I see. So who am I?

I am a Philippine born Canadian who migrated to Canada with his parents at the age of two in 1977. While I have been politically interested for most of my youth, it was not until after my first return visit to the Philippines (after my undergrad years) that I began to involve myself in issues affecting Filipinos. Like many I yearned for a sense of identity. I wanted to understand what it meant to be 'Filipino.' And so on that first return visit I wanted to experience the place as a Filipino would, which to me meant seeking out and living with family. I chose to live with my mother's cousin who still lived in Manila. This was a family whose socioeconomic status was equal to our own before we migrated to Canada. I was shocked to learn that they lived as informal settlers (sometimes referred to as '*squatters*') directly adjacent to active railway tracks. It was a home of cinderblock and corrugated iron and built over a sewage canal. The train would pass every half an hour and shake up the house, a train that passed literally less than a metre from the back wall of the home, a train that I was told took a life or two (usually a child) every year. Rats and cockroaches were such common housemates that by the end of my four months living there I was used to brushing them aside to use the kitchen, or washroom, or sometimes just to sit down.

This was a critical period in my political development. To personally experience the difference in the lives of my family in Canada and the Philippines, family that began at a similar socioeconomic level, led to many questions and led to a deep affectual disturbance to my personal sense of justice and morality. From here my journey led me to politically minded freelance journalism and to later to joining Filipino grassroots people's organizations. That journey eventually crossed paths with academics like Philip Kelly at York University which brings me to my present role as a graduate researcher. My previous journalistic work on TVIRD's Canatuan gold mine in the Zamboanga peninsula became the basis for my choice of field research at the site of new TVIRD mine in a neighbouring province in the same region. However, what once seemed a straight forward analysis of the ills caused by large-scale foreign mining became more complicated when my initial ideas collided with what I discovered on-site.

I entered into this research with an activist framework: that large-scale mining (LSM) was the problem, that it was LSM that helped drive down local initiatives towards self-development of their communities economically, politically, and socially. Thus it came as a small surprise to discover that small-scale mining (SSM), at least for my field site, was in itself problematic.

Being of Filipino ethnicity, and one who spoke the national language, was a strong starting point in my gaining enough acceptance to conduct the research, but it was only a starting point. Issues of power and positionality had to be very carefully negotiated in this research. I remained “foreign” in upbringing and in elements of my culture. Further I was without doubt more socioeconomically privileged. While my parents came from working class backgrounds my education level and position as a researcher put me closer to petit bourgeois status in the eyes of Philippine activists, and for everyone else I was a “balikbayan¹⁵.” This is a term which brings with it connotations of wealth, and is often assumed to make one a little arrogant. My work required the acceptance of my research subjects, at least to the level of being able to comfortably share personal and/or difficult life moments with me.

Being a balikbayan researcher also provided me an automatic level of respect from many individuals, not only in the rural areas but also with private and public sector leaders and employees. For example with this latter group I employed a strategy of speaking in English and providing Canadian identification which allowed me to gain access that would have proved more difficult (and/or more time consuming) for a local individual. For the rural individuals who made up the bulk of my interviewees my privilege equally allowed me to get my foot in the door, but my ability to converse with them in a Philippine tongue of my personal life experiences (which I shared both through conversation and through photographs that I carried with me) helped bridge that gap to a level of comfort. With activists (including my local partner) it was my connection to other Filipino social justice organizations like BAYAN and Migrante which have chapters across the Philippines and abroad (including Toronto) that was the starting point of their acceptance. For non-activists it was more my openness with my family and personal history.

This “automatic respect” was something I asked Cory, one of my key local informants and guides, about. Making conversation during lunch one day I told him that it was ok to just call me by my first name (instead of “sir”), especially when we’re alone. He replied by telling me: *“Well aren’t you a Canadian researcher from a Canadian university? You have a higher education and a higher position than me, so that makes you a ‘sir’.”* This was a reminder to me of the responsibility I incur due to my

¹⁵ Literally *balik* = “to return”; *bayan* = “home/community/nation”. It is the term given to Filipinos working abroad, or those with foreign citizenship returning to the Philippines.

positionality. I may have wanted to be seen as an equal, but they knew (and they wanted me to know) that I was not.

I worked closely with my local contacts who acted as local guides and ‘insiders.’ When conducting interviews with community members I would be introduced by my local guide, from there I would introduce myself while at the same time introducing my project. For many the fear was that I was there as a researcher on behalf of large scale mining, and/or that I was too detached from the situation in the Philippines to understand them. To help with this I would share not only my own story of how I came to try to reconnect with my “Filipino-ness” but also of my personal work in the past regarding issues around large scale mining. I told them about how the experience of living with family as ‘squatters’¹⁶ opened my eyes to the problems in the Philippines, of how I couldn’t ignore Filipino issues in as much as I couldn’t ignore the fact that the face I saw in the mirror was Filipino, and of how my visit to the Canadian TVIRD mine in Canatuan made me realize how deep the problems were around mining. Through acknowledging that I am a man with privilege (having gained an education in Canada, and coming from an immigrant family that has been able to achieve a level of “middle class” comfort relative to most Filipinos), but with family in the Philippines that still suffer hardships, I hoped to ease their comfort levels with me. Combined with the introduction and statement of trust coming from my local ‘insider’ I do believe that the vast majority were able to get past initial distrust. Though there was a class dynamic to this trust. I feel that those that still harboured suspicions tended to be those of higher class background, and/or those in relative positions of power—for example current community officials and those who had connections to TVI in Balabag.

RESEARCH TIMELINE

I arrived in the Philippines in late April, though I did not fly to Zamboanga Peninsula until mid-May 2014, and I remained in the region until the end of July. In early August I returned to Manila and in early September returned to Toronto.

While awaiting official ethics clearance, I spent May and June doing preliminary discussions with my local NGO partner AdPeace, as well as conducting some interviews with organizers and members of NGOs, and government organizations. I also took this opportunity to do online and library research, as well as speaking with other researchers at Ateneo University in Zamboanga City.

¹⁶ I used the term “squatters” (instead of “urban poor”) as that was the common term used by most individuals—even by the poor themselves.

From late June to the end of July, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the people directly affected by the loss of small-scale mining (SSM). These interviews were conducted throughout the Zamboanga peninsula, but the majority took place in the communities surrounding the former SSM site in the municipalities of Diplahan and Bayog in the provinces of Zamboanga Sibugay and Zamboanga del Sur. My initial interviewees were gathered through the help of AdPeace, but eventually expanded through snowball sampling based on those first contacts. My first set of interviews were in June 2014 with a group of former miners, primarily indigenous Subanen, at a community hall (located outside of their communities). It was here that I met timuay “Itim” who would become my first community contact and local guide, and it was he who helped introduce me to more former Balabag residents in their home communities.

Where timuay “Itim” was instrumental in introducing me to more activist minded former mine labourers, a former MOSSMA¹⁷ employee (whom I was introduced to via AdPeace) served as a go-between with the Balabag capitalist elite that ran that organization. And it was through MOSSMA that I was introduced to my second major community contact and guide “Cory.” Cory’s assistance allowed me access to a broader group of interview subjects from a broader spectrum of class backgrounds—some of whom were wary of social justice activists and had actually refused to be interviewed when I was accompanied by my local partner or by timuay Itim.

In July I also conducted visits and interviews at government offices (including the provincial and local government offices of Zamboanga del Sur, Diplahan, and Bayog, the Mines and Geosciences office in Zamboanga City, the regional offices of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples in Zamboanga City and Pagadian City, and others), and Ateneo University and their affiliate agencies in Zamboanga City.

In the last week of July I joined an international delegation led by Kairos-Canada investigating the human rights issues around the entry of TVIRD. While I was able to gain a small number of new usable interviews with community members, the focus of this trip was more in line with AdPeace’s social justice mission and thus that portion of the fieldwork contributed little to my research. In August I returned to Manila where I conducted interviews with more officials from the Canadian embassy, TVI-Pacific head office, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), and others. I also took a short trip up to the Cordillera region of Luzon which is the ancestral lands of the various ‘Igorot’ tribal groups. There I spoke with officials from the Cordillera People’s Alliance (CPA) about small scale mining in their regions.

¹⁷ “MOSSMA” was the acronym for the former SSM association that controlled Balabag, the Monte de Oro Small Scale Miners Association.

This interview helps add a brief comparison of SSM in the country and helps provide greater context to the unique situation of mining I found in my field site.

RESEARCH METHODS EMPLOYED

My research employed primarily the qualitative methods of semi-structured interviews and, to a lesser extent, participant observation. This was augmented by the collection of quantitative data from official documents obtained from government organizations, local government units (LGUs), MOSSMA, and academic sources. Casual conversations also sometimes yielded interesting and usable information that I recorded in a field journal. I recognize that a work based on the recollections of individuals entails a level of difficulty in that memory cannot be understood as ontologically “real.” This was especially the case in this research where a traumatic event plays a critical role (the displacement from people from their livelihood). Thus when I refer to their stories, it is understood within the context of their situation at the time of my fieldwork, as narratives that helped them make sense of their present in relation to their past.

My initial interviews were conducted off-site with community activists and some former miners. On-site I spent a total of approximately three weeks (not continuous) in the communities where the former Balabag miners returned. During those visits I would live with a local contact and through this was able to observe the everyday life of the community. With my local contact (and sometimes accompanied by an AdPeace member) we would visit different former miners and their families to conduct interviews in their homes. This again provided me not only information through interviews, but a glimpse into how they lived. I also visited with four of the former MOSSMA leaders in their homes or offices, three in the municipal centres and one who still lived in a rural barangay with other former miners. Beyond those directly associated with mining on Balabag I also conducted interviews with local politicians (past and present), with academics (from Ateneo-University in Zamboanga City, and with the University of the Philippines-Bagui), government officials (including with the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, and with the Canadian Embassy in Manila), and I also spoke with top executives of TVI-Pacific and TVIRD (including the Canadian CEO Clifford James, Corporate Communications Director Kaycee Crisostomo, and TVIRD President Eugene Mateo).

Virtually all official interviews were recorded on a small digital recorder. “Official” interviews were those conversations that were explicitly introduced to the subject as an interview. There were a couple official interview subjects that declined having their voices recorded (the Canadian embassy and the top TVI-Pacific officials), however they consented to my taking hand-made notes during the interview.

Permission was requested verbally for the majority of my interviews which was recorded on digital audio (the exception being TVI-Pacific's Kaycee Crisostomo who signed a written consent form). Information gained via casual conversation with interview subjects was also recorded in a personal field journal with the consent of interview subjects.

RECRUITING INTERVIEWEES

In order to recruit interview subjects I employed a variety of methods that developed organically from each other. My earliest contacts came through my local partner AdPeace, these included an activist who lived in Bayog (the municipality under which Balabag officially falls in modern maps), an activist who was not directly involved with SSM but had contacts with the former miners, and a former employee of MOSSMA. Two of these initial contacts helped gather groups of affected individuals over multiple days to a meeting off-site. During these initial interviews the security situation in Bayog and Diplahan was still being assessed and so they were conducted in a neighbouring municipality. The former miners were interviewed individually. From the third contact I was able to establish connections with MOSSMA leaders.

In the group sessions I was able to make contact with a community leader who lived in communities where the former miners returned and was able to secure their assistance so as to be able to visit the communities themselves. From there they became my local "insider" guides who further introduced me to more individuals, and through these individuals a snowball sampling method was employed. A similar strategy was employed with MOSSMA. Through these SSM leaders I was able to secure a local "insider" guide who helped introduce me to more individuals and a snowball sampling method developed. This method was also augmented by chance encounters on site (for example, individuals I met while simply 'hanging out' in the community). There were also individuals who sought me out specifically when news travelled that a researcher was present (though this was a very small number). Over time the sample was focused through my explicit requests to be introduced to individuals who formerly performed different mining activities who were of different class statuses during the SSM era.

TOTAL INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

MOSSMA documents¹⁸ state that the Balabag community had 200-250 local owners (operating tunnels, rod mills, CIP plants, traders, etc.) at the height of their operations in 2011. Approximately 60 to 70 rod mills were in existence, along with hundreds of tunnels. Over fifty sari-sari stores of different sizes operated in the community. Along with their dependents (the majority of whom would have lived off-site in their home communities), the Balabag community claimed to have supported up to 5000 members. These documents claimed that the Subanen made up 70 percent of this number.

In order to analyze class dynamics and class mobility, my goal in entering this work was to conduct interviews with at least 20 individuals directly involved with the different layers of SSM production. This was to be augmented by additional interviews and/or data collection from related governments, government officials, activist organizations, and academics. In actuality *I was able to conduct a total of 83 interviews*, with 48 of those coming from individuals affected by SSM on Mt. Balabag. The increase in sample size resulted both from the enthusiasm shown by potential respondents, and my need for respondents that could elaborate upon complicated conceptual details. The larger sample allowed me the opportunity to search for interviewees who were able to elaborate on difficult conceptual matters such as class dynamics and the hurdles to capital accumulation (as it relates to the means of production), as well as a balanced reflection on how capital accumulation affected social and cultural life, consumption, environmental and human health, and class reproduction. The 35 non-Balabag affected interviews were the result of both a targeted approach¹⁹ (i.e. there were certain individuals and organizations that I felt that I required to speak with and/or collect data from), and chance opportunities²⁰ that presented themselves. Not all the 35 interviews proved to be directly influential in the writing of this thesis, but they all helped me understand various aspects of economic, social, and cultural life in the region.

The following is a breakdown of the 48 individuals who were directly involved with mining in Balabag, or who were the direct dependents of miners (i.e. the spouse or adult children). For those directly involved with mining I spoke with five financiers (including four of the top six financiers), 16 CIP

¹⁸ Written in English between 2010 to 2013. These were never published in any official media outlets but were distributed as letters or pamphlets, or were powerpoint presentations. Their intended audience were the government and local, national, and international NGOs and activist groups. I obtained them directly from MOSSMA officials.

¹⁹ This includes, for example, interviews/data collection from LGUs, government agencies, and with TVI-Pacific.

²⁰ This includes, for example, chance meetings with Subanen leaders from across the region.

plant owners, 16 rod mill owners, and 25 of various types of labourers²¹. There were also MOSSMA employees who served in a non-mining capacity (including one advisor and one teacher), housewives (2), a jewellery maker, and various vendors (4). Twenty-one of these 48 were of Subanen descent. My sample size was large enough to be able to analyze the general characteristics of the community, though I was not quite able to interview as many Subanen as I had wished. The reality of their situation was that unlike the majority of the non-indigenous population, many of Subanen workers originally came from more disparate locations which included areas that were inaccessible by road²² and without a local guide I was unable to visit them.

Beyond the 48 directly involved with the Balabag mining community, I also spoke with 35 others (for a total interview sample of 83²³). Of these 35, the largest groups were officials from government agencies (7), followed by officials from local government units (LGU) (6), and Subanen timuays (6). These agencies²⁴ included: different branches of the National Commission on indigenous Peoples²⁵ (5), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (1), and the Commission on Human Rights (1). Six of the 35 were from LGUs²⁶ from the municipalities of Diplahan and Bayog, and from the province of Zamboanga del Sur. Three of the 35 were TVI and TVIRD officials (including Canadian CEO Clifford James, TVIRD president Eugene Mateo, and their public relations officer). Of the 35, nine were Subanen (six of the nine were timuays) from across the Zamboanga Peninsula, including leaders from other areas affected by mining²⁷. Other interviews of note were with the Canadian embassy (1), activist organizations like the Cordillera People's Alliance, and academics with research either on the Subanen (1) and on small-scale mining (1).

My interviews with the 48 individuals related to Balabag SSM began with general demographic queries. From there I asked questions to ascertain their class positions before, during, and after mining,

²¹ A further breakdown can be found in Chapter Five in the section titled "Division of Labour." Please note that there is some overlap in these numbers as, for example, some labourers eventually became rod mill owners, and/or some rod mill owners eventually became CIP Plant owners, etc.

²² More about the Subanen situation will be discussed in Chapter Four.

²³ Total interviews: 48 related to Balabag + 35 non-Balabag interviewees = 83 total.

²⁴ Documents were also collected from these agencies. Further documents were collected from (though no interviews were granted by) the Mines and Geosciences Bureau.

²⁵ Including the National Executive Director. Marlea P. Muñoz.

²⁶ Municipal profile documents were also collected from these LGUs.

²⁷ This included an interview with timuay Boy Anoy from Canatuan, the first TVIRD site and whose activism had brought the issues of Canadian mining in the peninsula to worldwide attention.

and then followed up with questions to (1) provide details about the work they did, (2) the relationships within the community, (3) earnings, expenditures, savings and investments, (4) displacement, and (5) post-SSM life. Long term mobility and well-being were measured both via changes in class position, as well as by the perceived impacts of mining on their overall life chances (i.e. improved educational attainment, improved chances in acquiring stable above-subsistence livelihoods, etc.), and quality of life (i.e. cultural and health impacts). For the 35 interviews with individuals not directly related to Balabag I crafted specific questions based on that respondent's area of knowledge.

Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner in that there were specific themes of interest (listed above) that I wanted to address. I would follow up on answers given and I would also sometimes share other responses given by respondents to elicit a further response. A broad sample of the questions I used as a guide are provided in the appendix to this thesis. It should be noted that not every question was asked of every interviewee. Limiting factors included the time we had together, their willingness to answer, and the relevancy of the question (e.g. I had questions that I felt more appropriate for mine owners over labourers, etc.).

MY KEY COMMUNITY CONTACTS & GUIDES

While in the field I stayed with a variety of local key informants and their families. This arrangement proved to be a boon to my research as not only was I helped by their local knowledge and their ability to help introduce me to affected individuals, but I was also able to perform participant observation of everyday life in the community. My two primary local guides and gatekeepers were both involved with mining in various ways:

- (1) **Timuay Itim**²⁸, a Subanen community leader, whose family was one of the original residents of Mt. Balabag before SSM. He initially worked as a tunnel miner and through his savings and loans from MOSSMA financiers was able to invest in a rod mill and CIP plant in the last year and a half before SSM was closed down by the government in support of the TVIRD claim. At the time of my fieldwork he held no regular work, and did occasional agricultural day labour work, but personal illness was an obstacle. His home was located in one of the barangays near to where many former Balabag residents now reside. I stayed with him at the home of his daughter for approximately one

²⁸ All names, except those representing official state and corporate bodies, have been changed to protect the identities of respondents (as shall be explained in the following later section).

week to conduct interviews²⁹. Timuay Itim was a man in his mid-40s though he was very thin and moved like a man many years older. He was separated from his wife and had many children, most of whom lived in the various sitios and barangays of Bayog and Diplahan, though some lived with his in-laws a province away in a predominantly Subanen community. I was joined by AdPeace members during my visit to the rural communities with timuay Itim.

- (2) **Cory** was a younger man in his thirties with three children. He was born Subanen in a barangay of Bayog though he was raised in a Visayan home by a Visayan family. His educational achievements in high school earned him a scholarship and he graduated from college. He was well known by many of the former miners as he had a prominent leadership role within one of MOSSMA's public service initiatives in Balabag (and after the end of SSM was even employed by TVIRD for a short period). I visited him alone multiple times, all in all totalling approximately two weeks. My time with him provided me access to a wider spectrum of former Balabag residents from different classes and community roles. Cory was financially more secure as he had not had the bad fortune to lose investments in Balabag as his work there was salary based. Moreover his college education and close community ties provided him both cultural and social capital that helped him acquire one of the few administrative jobs in his barangay after the demolition of SSM in Balabag.

SECURITY & ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As mentioned earlier, my initial interviews also had the goal of inquiring as to the safety of my entering communities where the displaced Balabag miners returned. I was assured by local peoples that except for a few heavily patrolled areas near the Bayog poblacion I was safe to enter as long as I was with a respected local official. The area of Mt. Balabag itself I would not be able to enter due to it now being privately controlled by TVIRD who had their claim area blockaded. I would eventually be able to enter Bayog poblacion and some of the surrounding barangays and sitios in the company of Cory who had spoken to local Bayog LGU officials to secure my safe entry. Here too, the privilege of being a Canadian researcher helped open doors that local activists found difficult to breach. This said, the safety of my interview subjects was less secure.

The history of large scale mining's (LSM's) entry into rural areas in the Philippines has long brought with it increased danger of human rights violations up to and including extrajudicial killings.

²⁹ He chose for us to stay at his daughter's home as his own home was said to be frequently visited by the private security forces of those supporting TVIRD.

Reports from human rights groups like AdPeace, Kairos-Canada, and MiningWatch-Canada claim that there were reports of up to one hundred killings in Bayog in the lead up and following the municipal elections in the spring of 2012. Further there were also reports of threats to former miners and mine owners including the highly publicized (and contested) ‘leaked’ TVIRD emails (emails printed on TVIRD letterhead, dated 16 May 2012). These listed MOSSMA leadership and advisors as “targets” bearing “Red” or “Blue” status which were actively being surveilled by TVIRD’s “special surveillance unit,” which were supposedly armed with “tasers” and/or “weapons for killing enemy combatants.” Though I was not able to verify these threats, for the purpose of my work it was very important that the identities of those feeling threatened were protected.

For those in danger of possible negative ramifications, no written details of their identity were recorded in my field notes and only oral permission as to their participation was requested. Further, names have been changed or omitted completely in my writing. In practice (as it was unclear whether an individual was safe from possible negative consequences) all identities have been made anonymous in this research *except for* official government, academic, and corporate representatives. Outside of those key insiders that connected me to potential participants, no one else was privy to the identities of who I spoke to, or where specifically they resided. For some high profile interviewees that expressed a feeling of direct danger to themselves I will implement other security measures as follows:

- When gender was not a key component of the issues surrounding a specific person’s case, I may change the gender pronoun used.
- As the top leadership of MOSSMA (given the name the “Magic Six” and their close associates) believe themselves to be in real threat I may mix and match some of their accounts so that no one MOSSMA representative can be traced to any particular statement.

As for my personal security, this was also a concern that necessitated certain precautions. The risk to a Canadian researcher of a direct attack from those with mining interests was always very low. The negative consequences to their financial interests that would result from such an international incident far outweighs any short term benefit to silencing my work. The most likely dangers would have come from either outside interests (e.g. kidnap-for-ransom gangs operate in certain known areas of Zamboanga peninsula which were relatively near my field site and to the urban centres), or from accidental targeting if I were mistaken for a Filipino journalist or researcher, or if caught by chance in the area where violence occurred. It was thus of importance to me that I avoid certain areas and I always carried identification and introduced myself as Canadian (not just to my interviewees, but to local government units). And as already discussed, before entering the communities that the former miners returned to, I first conducted

interviews off-site to determine safety levels and to secure local guides.

LANGUAGE CONSIDERATIONS

Language did prove to be a minor hurdle for me in the field. Though I speak the national language (Tagalog), not all in the region were fluent in this tongue. More common was the use of Bisaya, the regional language, and for a minority, Subanen. For those that could speak Tagalog (approximately twenty-five percent of my interviewees) I used that as the medium of communication as this removed an extra step in the translation process. For those that did not, I had an interpreter act as an intermediary. For the most part my interpreters were either a member of AdPeace, or my local guide. There were also two sets of interviews conducted in English, one with the Canadian embassy, the other with my interviews with TVI-Pacific officials.

Chapter Four:

BALABAG BEFORE SMALL-SCALE MINING

The Philippines is a country rich in mineral resources that would be worth trillions of pesos if sold today (PhP47 trillion, according to a leader in the mining industry). These mineral resources are located within our lands or under our seas, both of which locations are also rich in other living or non-living resources that sustain economic activities such as farming, eco-tourism, and fishing. Mining operations necessarily involve the alteration of the land or seabed, such that people who use the land or sea for settlement and/or livelihood are likely to be displaced by mining operations. The lands where mineral resources are located may also have cultural or ecological values not easily measured in monetary terms (Ateneo School of Government Mining Policy Brief, 2011).

In order to understand the story of long term socioeconomic outcomes resulting from small-scale mining (SSM) in Balabag, it is necessary to first briefly contextualize the role of the Philippines in the global capitalist economy. From there I will narrow the field to the state of mining in the Philippines and its impacts on agrarian life and indigenous peoples (IPs). The semi-feudal form of production dominant in the nation and in Zamboanga peninsula, its class relations, class dynamics, and capital flows shall be discussed to provide context for the eventual forms they would take within SSM. And finally to bring our discussion to Balabag I shall provide a brief history of the region, and the modern day challenges to socioeconomic mobility found therein.

GOLD MINING IN THE PHILIPPINES: THE CREATION OF A NEOLIBERAL MINING POLICY

The advent of the neoliberal era in the 1980s and 1990s reinvigorated interest in Philippine mining. In that period the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) began to put pressure on the Philippine state to liberalize its mining laws (Bonlinget, 2004; Colchester et al, 2005:189). These institutions provided funds and encouraged large scale development projects (e.g. the Chico Dam project in the Cordillera which resulted in the death of indigenous leader Macliing Dulag in 1980) to help create the infrastructure to attract foreign investment. Further pressure came via special government and inter-government seminars which promoted the benefits of neoliberal reforms. In one such seminar in 1989

organized by the United Nations Department of Technical Cooperation and Development, WB Senior Industrialist Specialist Felix Remy explained the Bank's "problem" with current mining laws:

The first set of sector-specific problems that we find in our mining sector work are the 'mining law' issues, that is, the constraints arising out of the existing mining legislation. The issues that we encounter most frequently in the mining legislation of our borrowers are: problems of inadequate or difficult access to land and mineral rights by the productive agents of the sector; restrictions to foreign investment which are specific to the mining sector; the existence of 'sector-specific taxes' which can take the form of royalties, production, sales or exports, taxes; and legislation of a discretionary nature (Colchester et al, 2005: 190).

That resulted in the creation of the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 (Republic Act No. 7942). The Act facilitated the entry of large foreign mining corporations to enter the mineral-rich territories, most often the ancestral domains of indigenous peoples. It opened up the mining sector to 100% foreign ownership, provided long renewable tax holidays, and relaxed environmental regulations (Molintas, 2004: 294). The law, called "one of the most modern in Southeast Asia" by the US Geological Survey, saw immediate interest from foreign investment. Between 1994 and 1996 the number of foreign mining companies increased by 400 percent (Holden et al, 2011: 146). The pressure towards economic liberalization continues. As of 2013 the WB's Philippine Economic Update still pointed out that the tax burden could be further streamlined, along with further "rationalization" of fiscal incentives (World Bank, 2013: 19).

SMALL-SCALE MINING LAWS IN THE PHILIPPINES

In contrast to the Mining Act that governs LSM, there are two separate national laws for SSM, both predating the Mining Act of 1995: Presidential Decree 1899 and Republic Act No. 7076 (Ateneo 2008). The former (from 1982) legalized SSM during a period when foreign large scale mining was on the decline in the country, and focused on traditional forms of non-industrial mining. The latter (also called the "People's Small-Scale Mining Act of 1991") allows for minimal investment in mining equipment, but disqualifies the use of "sophisticated" mining equipment. These two laws have been a source of confusion for both local legislators and miners as the application processes and criteria are vastly different. Moreover, according to academics at Ateneo university, it is unclear if the introduction of RA 7076 has repealed PD 1899. Further, SSM permits are limited to two years (renewable for another

two), which, contrasted with the twenty-five years (renewable for another twenty-five) for LSM, is seen to be a discouraging factor (Gimenez 2011: 66).

THE STATE OF MINING IN THE PHILIPPINES

Situated on the Pacific “Ring of Fire,” the Philippine archipelago in Southeast Asia is one of the most mineral rich nations in the world. More than \$840 billion USD in yet untapped base (chromium, copper, lead, nickel, zinc) and precious (gold and silver) metals is estimated by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, under the country’s Department of Energy and Natural Resources (Holden and Jacobson 2007, Pavlova and Hincks 2013). Approximately 30 percent of the total land area of the country has been expropriated to foreign mining interests, and 482 mining applications filed with the government (Doyo, 2011).

Despite these numbers a report by Ateneo University (2011) argues that mining (both LSM and SSM) in the Philippines has contributed very little to overall economic growth, has not made a great impact to overall employment generation (relative to its potential), and shows poor linkages to industrial growth in other sectors. Further the places where mining is a major industry have been associated with an increase in poverty. Throughout the nation’s history, mining’s contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) has remained in the single digits. As of 2010 it has contributed only one percent to the GDP—compared to the agricultural sector’s 12 percent (Bureau of Agricultural Statistics, 2011). The sector makes up less than one percent of the national employment numbers (0.5 to 0.6% from between 2008 to 2011)—compared to 33 percent for the agricultural sector. Cielito Habito’s (2010) work on economic growth criticizes the poor spinoff employment generation resulting from mining. In a 2011 study by Arsenio Balisacan individuals engaged in mining continued to show an increase in poverty³⁰ relative to workers in other sectors, from 34.64 percent in 2006 to 48.71 percent in 2009 (Ateneo, 2011). In the same study the income poverty within the mining sector was seen to be rising to the levels seen in the agricultural sector (where numbers were holding steady, from 47.84 in 2006 to 47.92 percent in 2009).

Unfortunately for my research, which focused on a SSM site, the official mining sector data from the Philippines often lumps together large and small-scale mining. Thus it was difficult to differentiate the relative socioeconomic impacts of one compared to the other. Further even when these two scales are separated there still lies the problem of differentiating between the ‘traditional’ and ‘gold rush’ forms.

³⁰ Balisacan uses a multidimensional poverty index (MPI).

That said there was some data that can be shared specific to SSM in general, however poor data collection due to most SSMs being labelled as “illegal” by the government adds a further level of difficulty to accurate reporting. The Mines and Geosciences Bureau estimated that there were at least 37 provinces in the country where SSMs operate (Rey and Saturay 2005:6). In value terms, gold is the number one mineral produced by the Philippines (AFRIM 2012:4), and small-scale mining has been documented to contribute a significant percentage of total gold production, *based on total gold sales to the Central Bank of the Philippines (BSP)*. Between 1990 to 1999 SSM contributed 40 to 50 percent of the Philippines total gold production, and by 2009 this number rose to almost 80 percent (AFRIM 2012:4, Ateneo 2011, Daniel 2012). SSM sold 28,198 kg to the BSP in 2008 and 26,112 kg in 2009 (AFRIM 2012:4). And it provided direct and indirect employment and means of livelihood to nearly 200,000 people in the 90s and up to 500,000 in the 2000s (Ateneo 2011, Mae 2013). It was estimated that SSM economically supports at least one million of the country’s population of over 92 million (Ateneo 2011). In 2012 the value produced by small-scale mining was estimated to be \$1,515,600,000 USD (Daniel 2012).

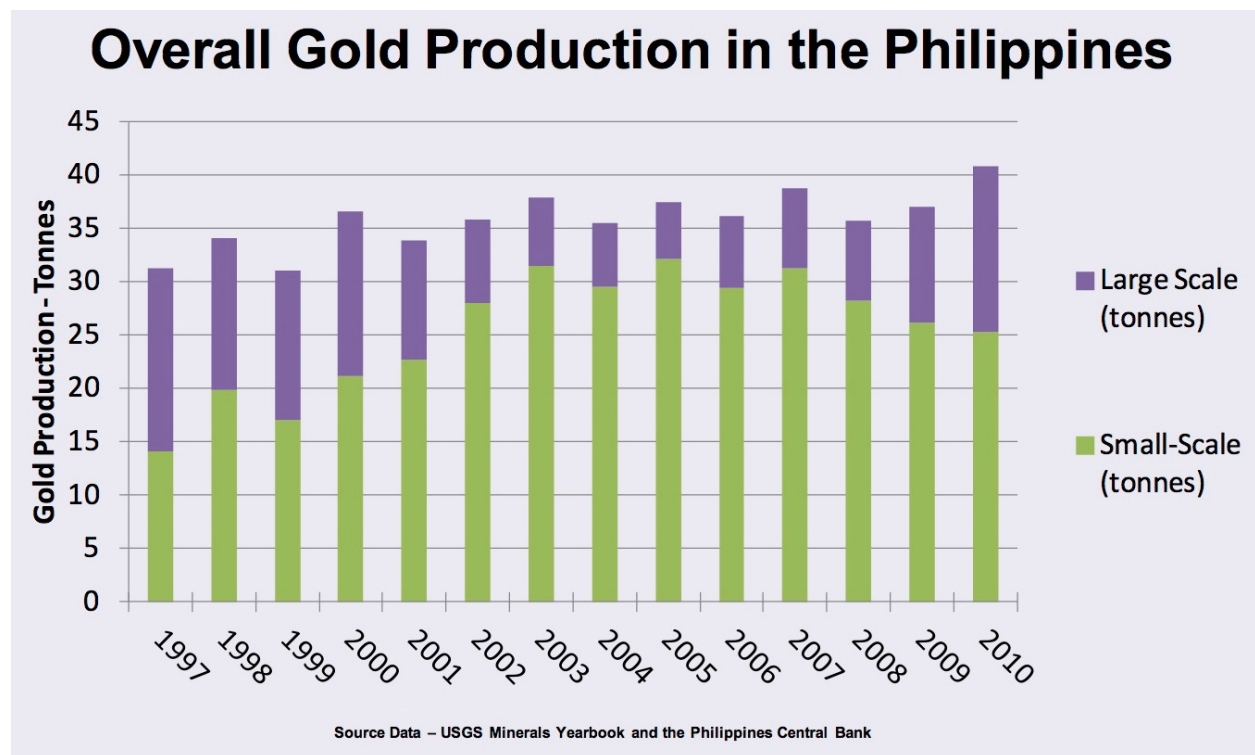


Table 1: Overall gold production in the Philippines (Daniel 2012).

MINING ON INDIGENOUS LANDS

The vast majority of mining in the Philippines is within or adjacent to the ancestral lands of indigenous peoples (IPs). Two-thirds of all the Philippine IPs are found on the southern-most Philippine island of Mindanao they are collectively referred to as “lumads” (Holden et al, 2011:146). While the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera mountains in Luzon have had a long history of gold mining pre-dating Spanish colonization, the indigenous Subanen of Zamboanga peninsula did not have a pre-colonial mining history. In this region extractive industry began in the post-WWII period with the arrival of foreign corporations. The presence of transnational corporations continue to have a noticeable effect on the socioeconomic well-being, the natural environment, and the culture of the lumad peoples. “*Our aspirations to continue to care for the forest must not be lost, for as Lumad, once the forest is gone, so our being a Lumad go as well... The identity of the Lumad as a person is tied to ... ancestral domain,*” says Dante Sinhayon, an emerging upland tribal leader [Sealza et al, 2013, p4].

On paper the rights of IPs in the Philippines are protected by the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act (IPRA)³¹, which is recognized as one of the world’s most progressive laws to deal with indigenous populations (Erni, 2008: 428). The IPRA has key provisions which seem to protect the rights of indigenous communities to self-determination and which require their *free, prior, and informed consent* (FPIC) before industry can enter upon their lands:

Chapter III, *Rights to Ancestral Domains*, SECTION 59: “...no certification shall be issued by the NCIP without the free and prior informed and written consent of ICCs/IPs [indigenous cultural communities/indigenous persons] concerned.”

Chapter IV, *Right to Self-Governance and Empowerment*, SECTION 13: “The State recognizes the inherent right of ICCs/IPs to self-governance and self-determination and respects the integrity of their values, practices and institutions. Consequently, the State shall guarantee the right of ICCs/IPs to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”

³¹ Passed two years after the Mining Act of 1995.

However these protections are granted only to indigenous communities that have secured a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADTs) from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) and, as of this writing, the Subanen of Mt. Balabag have not yet received approval of their CADT³².

The entry of mining into indigenous communities in the Philippines has had serious consequences. Congress Representative Teddy B. Baguilat, an Igorot and a former executive assistant to the undersecretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), writes these reflections (2011):

In indigenous communities, the mining operations resulted in the following:

1. Loss of ownership, control & management of land & resources (the material base of the peoples' identity, culture and survival), and denial of the peoples' resource management systems
2. Massive loss of livelihood & destruction of local economies causing threats to food security
3. Dislocation of settlements, villages and weakening of socio-cultural systems
4. Destruction of bio-diversity, pollution, and degradation of the environment
5. Loss of traditional knowledge & systems of resource management

William Holden, Kathleen Nadeau and R. Daniel Jacobson, in writing about the accumulation by dispossession found in Philippine large scale mining, stress the first point, that loss of land also equals a loss of culture for indigenous people.

[T]he most serious threat mining poses to indigenous peoples is the threat of displacement from their lands... If an indigenous community is displaced... the culture of that community may be gravely threatened... the wealth that supports the sustainability of their culture is found in institutions, environmental knowledge, local resources, and especially in land embellished with cultural meaning (2011: 142-43).

They further discuss accumulation by dispossession in indigenous Philippines as replacing “long-standing indigenous forms of production and consumption [with] new market based forms of production and consumption.” By transforming their traditional ways of life IPs are pushed into life as poor rural and urban migrants (2011: 157). For example, UN Special Rapporteur Rodolfo Stavenhagen (2003) noted that development managers of a dam project in the northern Philippines “are steering the households away

³² In the previous TVIRD mining site in Canatuan the Subanon had received a CADT, but it did not prevent an FPIC between the LSM and the IP leaders from being signed.

from the peasant livelihood mix traditional to their indigenous communities, towards the monocultures that tend to define the production of vegetables, flowers, broom grass, and livestock for the market. Starting with their lending of capital for the new livelihood ventures, the watershed managers are introducing the households to new economic relations that may or may not be good for the communities” (Stavenhagen, 2003: 28). Holden et al go on to cite examples of thirty lumad families living under a bridge displaced by a nickel mine in Mindanao, and the displaced indigenous peoples of the Cordillera mountains (on Luzon island) currently living as urban poor in the city of Baguio (Holden, 2011: 152).

Holden et al (2011) were concerned with how LSMs are able to lay claim to indigenous lands through the process of accumulation by dispossession. My research notes that SSM shares some basic similarities in terms of the economic drivers that push locals to claim mining lands—but adds that even within SSM where indigenous peoples make up the majority of the workforce, the embodied cultural capital of the Subanen place them at a disadvantage. Mindanao’s history in the second half of the twentieth century created new antagonisms based on ethnicity when Filipino Christian (mostly from the Visayas) were encouraged to settle the resource rich island.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ZAMBOANGA PENINSULA

Mindanao is the second largest island (containing 43 percent of the land area and 25 percent of the population) in the archipelago and lies on its southernmost boundary. My research site can be found in the province of Zamboanga del Sur in Region IX of the Philippines, otherwise known as Zamboanga Peninsula (on the west side of the island). Despite having never fully been conquered during the Spanish colonial period, the American invasion in the early twentieth century put Mindanao under US colonial control, and it thus was included as part of the nation with the granting of formal independence post World War II (Holden & Jacobson 2007). Post-independence the Philippine government began encouraging settlement in Mindanao by Christians that lived in other parts of the Philippines (Tan, 2000). This twentieth century act of accumulation by dispossession was in large part a policy to wrest control of the resource rich island from both its strongly independent Moro (muslim) population who did not fully recognize the Manila government, and from the numerous lumad (indigenous) peoples who were not yet integrated into the national economy. As Peter Krinks writes in his examination of the history of economic inequality in the Philippines “the sparsely settled tracts of Mindanao “(outside of the Muslim areas) had no powerful, long-established families, so there were opportunities for accumulation by new people” (2002:135).

Between 1948 and 1960 approximately 1.2 million people took advantage of government resettlement programmes, and in the 1960s and 1970s a further 360,000 people migrated to Mindanao (Tigno, 2006). Overall from the 1950s to the 1970s there were a total of forty-two government-assisted migration projects that moved over 50,000 families to three-fourth of a million hectares in Mindanao (Tigno, 2006). By the end of the twentieth century 25 percent of the population of Mindanao was Muslim and 75 percent was non-Muslim (Tigno, 2006; Yegar, 2002). One of the driving factors that encouraged families to migrate was the promise of land of their own to till, yet as time went on this became less and less likely. Krinks writes that “the benefits were not evenly distributed. By the 1960s new arrivals could find land only as squatters in the forests or as tenants” (2002:135). This relocation process fuelled a sense of injustice in the Moro and Lumad communities —and in time with the migrants themselves. This helped inform the factors that led to the creation of, and/or support for, insurgency groups. These groups can be split into two main types: the various Moro independence movements that draw their support from disenfranchised muslims; and the communist movement which finds supporters in poor peasants and lumads seeking agrarian reform.

The Subanen are the largest³³ lumad tribe in Mindanao and number almost half a million persons (from a total population of almost three million in the Zamboanga peninsula) (National Statistics Office, 2010). Their history has been one of continuous displacement. There are two main variants to their story: one begins with their arrival to the peninsula thousands of years ago (based on archeological theories) and traces their movement eastwards, the other puts the origin of the Subanen more recently (in the late 1400s) with one family and focuses on oral histories of displacement. The first traces their ancestry to Malay origins, arriving on the peninsula between 2,500 to 6000 years ago (Lopez-Bernal 2010:4). In this version of history they were the first peoples of the peninsula and established what would become Zamboanga City before spreading east up to the Cotobato region. The second version begins in Cotobato and comes from Subanen oral accounts which recount the entry of Muslim outsiders as the catalyst to four brothers and a sister being driven apart and spawning the different lumad tribes of Mindanao.

In my field interviews with Subanen leaders it was the oral history that was recounted. These stories were corroborated by Subanen scholar, Dr. Vicente Imbing (2002). Imbing traces the origins of the tribe to the late fifteenth century in the Cotobato region of Mindanao (his account of Subanen history is used below). The arrival of Islam to the region in the late 1400s resulted in a rift within the lumad ruling family, as one brother converted to Islam. The siblings and their followers divided into three groups, with

³³ “Largest” both in terms of population and in land distribution.

one migrating north (on the westward edge of the peninsula) becoming the forebears to Mindanao's indigenous Moro tribes, another moving south and eventually subdividing further to become other lumad tribes, and the third migrating west towards the peninsula and eventually becoming the Subanen.

The Malay muslim settlers were part of large sultanates and held greater technological and political power than the indigenous Subanen. Their arrival, and the growing lumad Moro population, steadily increased the pressure on the technologically weaker Subanen peoples and with their arrival their history of regular displacement and migration began. The oral accounts (Imbing 2002) report that the expansion of Moro tribes would result in intermittent warfare ensuring a constantly shifting Subanen territory. The taking of Subanen for slaves during war and in slave raids continued throughout this period, and was a major point of contention up until the 19th century. The arrival of the Spanish to establish a permanent presence in what would become Zamboanga City in the mid-seventieth century displaced yet further populations of Subanen and intensified conflict between the different peoples of the peninsula for the best lands and boosted the slave trade. In this period there were also many Subanen communities which converted to Islam or Christianity to avoid conflict and migration. The American invasion of the early twentieth century continued to divide communities as the Subanen peoples were forced to take sides, with many leaders siding with the Americans against the Moro. In this post-fifteenth century period there were also many Subanen communities which converted to Islam or Christianity to avoid conflict and migration. For those that sought to retain their indigenous identities many joined forces with the Americans during the colonial period as they saw them as a counterbalance to the Moro incursion into the peninsula³⁴.

This history³⁵, based on constant uncertainty and conflict left the Subanen peoples in a conflicted state, both wary of outsiders and dependent on their benevolence. The arrival of new settlers in the post-independence period after WWII brought renewed push factors that threatened Subanen land security, and new economic regimes threatened an already precarious indigenous social, economic, and cultural system. Today, the Subanen are spread across the Zamboanga peninsula mostly residing in the rural countryside. Due to incursions by settlers (this will be discussed in a later section in this chapter) Subanen communities³⁶ tend to live in small communities in the highlands on less arable lands and subsist on a

³⁴ As of the beginning of the twentieth century, the Zamboanga peninsula was still primarily Subanen territory (in terms of area) but with large scattered Moro settlements.

³⁵ As shared in interviews with local timuays, and as more systematically recorded by Subanen scholar, Dr. Vicente Imbing (2002).

³⁶ Though Subanen families also live in lowland barangays and sitios with settlers (and some have even moved to urban areas), communities that try to retain an indigenous identity tend to live in remote highland areas.

mixed economy heavily relying on “kaingin” (swidden) agriculture. Mt. Balabag, the site of my research, was once one of these small communities before the arrival of SSM.

THE SEMI-FEUDAL AGRARIAN ECONOMY

One important historical contingency that needs to be briefly discussed was the state of, and nature of, the local economy before the arrival of SSM. In my field site, as with most of rural Philippines, an agricultural based economy dominated to the extent that Philippine activists call the country’s mode of production “semi-feudal” (Aguilar 1989, Putzel 1995). The arrival of SSM to Balabag shifted sources of income and produced new bourgeois leaders out of former petit bourgeois middle peasant individuals. The form capitalism took there, being created by former agricultural workers, was derived from the semi-feudal form that dominated the countryside.

Semi-feudalism combines global capitalism with local feudalistic forms in the production of agricultural products. In this system a few large landlord families own the majority of agricultural land, while a large number of landless tenants do the tilling. The landlord extracts profit through the imposition of high rents, with typically between 50 to 80 percent of harvest income given to the landlord (Guererro 1970:93). This form of production is dependent on human and animal labour with very little modern technological farming devices employed. This labour heavy focus is the basis of the landlord’s wealth,

rather than reinvesting to raise farm productivity, most landlords behaved as ‘rent capitalists’. They merely acquired and planted more land or directed their accumulating capital into other sectors (including paying for tertiary education of their offspring) so there was a drain from rural areas (Krinks 2002:104).

While it was in the Spanish colonial period that feudalism spread across the Philippine archipelago it was the Muslim sultanates of Southeast Asia³⁷ that originally laid this foundation over a century before the arrival of Spain (Guererro 1970:81). The American colonial period introduced a limited form of democracy into the Philippines which helped entrench the feudal system as only members from rich landowning families were allowed to run for office and vote (Krinks 2002:51, Simbulan 2012:27). By the time formal independence was granted after WWII, the political and economic elite

³⁷ In the Philippines these are typically referred to as “Malay” muslims.

were almost entirely from this large landlord class. And even by the time democracy was re-introduced after the fall of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos the political landscape remained dominated by this group:

[I]n 1987 169 of the 200 “representatives belonged (by birth or marriage) to such groups [traditional political clans], with large landholdings or other major assets, although their numbers fell to 145 in the 1992 House. Even then, all but sixteen representatives were millionaires (Gutierrez 1994).

In looking at the nation as a whole University of the Philippines professor Roland Simbulan states that there were “about 250 political dynasties (families) who have dominated Philippine politics at the national and local level and who have monopolized political power as families for the past 30 years and more (2012:11).” In the province of Zamboanga del Sur where my research site is located the current governor, Antonio Cerrilles³⁸ family, was cited by Simbulan as belonging to one of its four dynastic clans (Simbulan 2012:38).

SOCIOECONOMIC MOBILITY IN ZAMBOANGA PENINSULA

Mt. Balabag is today located in the municipality of Bayog in the province of Zamboanga del Sur, on Zamboanga Peninsula (designated as Region IX in national government statistics). However, I will add as a note that at the onset of SSM on Balabag the area was claimed by the municipality of Diplahan in the province of Zamboanga Sibugay. There was ongoing debate (at the time of my field research) as to which claim was official, so for the sake of simplicity and as most official documents from academics and TVIRD attach it to Bayog, I will be following suit in this thesis. Zamboanga Peninsula, in western Mindanao was considered “one of the most promising areas for gold mineralization in the Philippines” (Jimenez et al, 2002) and according to Romie Valerio, Supervising Geologist of the Davao office of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) within the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), “Mindanao has the highest mineral³⁹ potential in the Philippines” (Holden & Jacobson 2007:159).

³⁸ Gov. Cerrilles was one of the big players in support of TVIRD against MOSSMA.

³⁹ “...particularly “nonferrous metals” (metals other than iron) or, as they are often called, “hardrock minerals” (the minerals are often found in consolidated rock of igneous origin) such as copper, gold, lead, nickel, silver, and zinc” (Holden & Jacobson 2007:159).

MUNICIPAL DEMOGRAPHICS & SOCIOECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

In order to understand the material factors that drive the potentials for socioeconomic mobility we must first examine the demographic data for the communities most affected by small scale mining on Mt. Balabag. The data presented here was gathered from the official municipal profiles⁴⁰ as tabulated by the local government units (LGUs) of Diplahan and Bayog⁴¹. According to my interviews the majority of the population involved with Balabag SSM originated from these two municipalities. It was also to these municipalities that most returned after the dismantling of the small scale mines. Before examining socioeconomic mobility within (and after) mining, I will provide an overview of the demographics of the area. One pillar of my argument is that overall underdevelopment in the region structurally limited opportunities for the majority of the population, and that this limited potential was in large part what made SSM so attractive to so many.

The municipalities of Bayog and Diplahan were (and are) primarily farming communities. Even during the tenure of SSM, agriculture remained the most common occupational sector, with most individuals working as paid day labourers with little to no land of their own. In Diplahan over 30 percent of the land area was allocated to agricultural land and agriculture related activities were the main source of income for 75 percent of the population. The average income for agricultural workers was approximately PhP2600 a month (PhP1000=\$21Cdn approx). For Bayog, 46 percent of the total land area was classified as agricultural. Rice, corn, rubber, lanzones fruit, and bananas rank as the top five crops of both municipalities. Rice and corn production were the staples of the agricultural economy, with rice produced for sale at market and with corn being the staple food for the majority of the population (ground corn sells at half the price of rice and was used as a rice substitute). According to the 2013 Philippines National Statistical Coordination Board data, Region IX (where both municipalities are located) was one of the poorest in the country. It had a 33.7% poverty rate (the national rate being 19.7%) based on a per capita income of less than PhP18,054 a year (NSCB, 2013). Agriculture makes up 50 percent of the regional domestic product, with the remainder accounted for by services (34 percent), industry (15 percent), and only one percent coming from mining and quarrying (Gomez 2012).

⁴⁰ Municipal profiles for Bayog and Diplahan from 2014 were provided by the LGUs.

⁴¹ Additional information from the official website of Zamboanga del Sur: <http://www.zamboangadelsur.gov.ph/city-and-municipality/bayog.php> and from the National Statistical Coordination Board: <http://www.nscb.gov.ph>

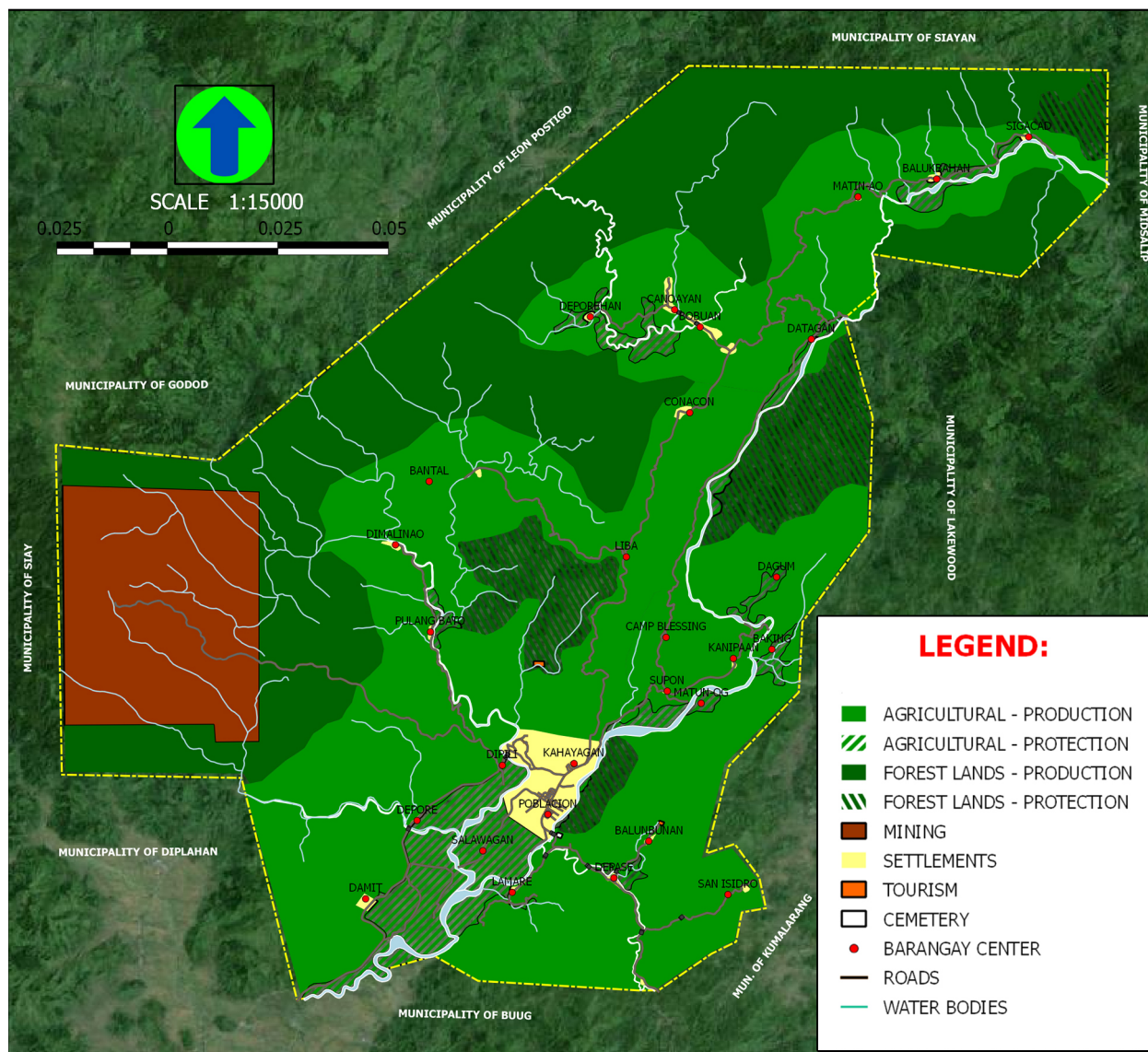


Figure 1.3: Zoning map for the municipality of Bayog (Municipal Profile, 2014).

The populations of these two municipalities had been steadily increasing since their creation at the onset of Visayan migration to the region in the 1950s. In recent decades the population of Bayog had seen a rise from 22,092 in 1990 to 30,048 by 2010. The corresponding population numbers for Dipalhan were 21,211 to 31,215. These growing populations were met with major problems with unemployment. For Dipalhan in 2010 it was calculated that almost 30 percent of the working-aged population (with three times more women than men) were not economically active⁴², while in Bayog that number was even

⁴² Note here that these numbers were for the economically active, not the total employed. In Dipalhan of the 70 percent economically active, 64.41 percent were actually employed.

higher at over 37 percent. Note that SSM in Balabag was still operational at the time of the 2010 census, and was near the height of its operation.

An overview of the types of employment activities outside of farming provides a picture of the overall level of industrialization. In Diplahan, the top three types of business permits issued (total in brackets) were for sari-sari (small family operated neighbourhood) stores (253), rice mills (50), and small family operated food stalls (30). Thirty four mining related permits were also issued, twenty-two for small scale coal mining, two for large scale coal mining, and ten for small scale gold mining⁴³. Similarly in Bayog, there were approximately 176 commercial establishments operating in the whole municipality of which the majority were classified as sari-sari or retailers in nature making up 28 percent of the businesses. Bayog also counted seventy-three industrial establishments, however enumerated only twenty five in its municipal profile: nine rice/corn mills, six related to mining, four vulcanizing shops, three bakeshops, two hollow block factories, and one furniture maker.

It was in this socioeconomic milieu of limited employment (limited in both type and number) that we can begin to see the pressures that limit levels of educational attainment. In Diplahan less than 15 percent had graduated high school, and less than one percent for college. The municipal office also estimates functional literacy rates at approximately 50 percent of the adult population. The Bayog municipal profile did not present equivalent data, but they do note that most schools in their area were in dire need of repair, and that worryingly, school enrolment was dropping for both elementary and high school from 2009 to 2010, and that for high schools this had been dropping since 2007 (when 793 were enrolled, while only 751 in 2010)—this despite an increasing population. Bayog notes that most schools lacked libraries, computer rooms, washrooms, and lacked enough teachers, classrooms, and textbooks for students. It should be noted that while Balabag had an elementary school (created by its SSM organization not by the government), it was cited by the municipal LGU as being in the worst condition overall having a student-teacher ratio of 73:1, and having no library, health clinic, computer room, or playground. There was also no high school in Balabag and prospective students would have had to travel ten kilometres down the mountain to Bayog Poblacion. Malnourishment was also noted by both municipalities as adding to the stresses felt by many students. The local governments both cite a lack of funds as central to resolving these issues.

Diplahan's municipal profile (2014) grappled with the question of why development was stalled in their municipality. It cited a variety of socioeconomic problems that hindered agricultural development,

⁴³ see Table 54 of the Diplahan Municipal Profile

the top two were landlessness, and agricultural producer's poor access to markets. The majority of the agricultural workers were poor landless peasants and this was seen as a disincentive to an increase in production. And many farmers (including small landowners) were reliant on the poor buying prices of agricultural middlemen to whom they sell their products. Diplahan's manufacturing sector, which the municipal profile lists as including "wood and bamboo craft industries, flower making and basketry, a number of rice and corn mills, and hollow block making" was seen to suffer from a lack of capital, poor incentives provided to investors, and poor access to market outlets for manufactured goods. These issues foreshadow the hopelessness many expressed to me in my interviews.

Bayog's municipal profile does not lay out their top developmental problems in the same way but by reading into its 'vision statement' we can infer current realities through its vision for the future:

Bayog [will become] a highly-developed town steered by competent, politically-willed and proactive manpower with adequate infrastructure facilities, driven by sustainable and viable agri-mining industries, responsibly utilizing natural resources in an ecologically-balanced environment, and a haven of God-fearing, child-friendly, self-reliant, well-informed, empowered, culture-sensitive, and a drug-free community geared towards improved quality of life.

This sentence hints at the negative effects of both the semi-feudal and mining economy in Bayog. In a later section I will examine the issue of rising incidences of social vice (including substance abuse) both during and after the end of SSM. As we shall see, the growth of vices have been associated with the "gold rush" masculinist culture that emerged as a manifestation of the lack of opportunities and incentive for productive investment.

In general, the dearth of income generating opportunities outside agriculture can be seen to be a limiting factor to the drive to improve class position. With production focused heavily on farming the semi-feudal system remained dominant which helped entrench class positions within familiar lines. The indigenous population, having been pushed away from their traditional lands, were also pushed from full participation in this new economy. In the municipal profiles it is unclear how the Subanen fared relative to the settlers. These factors point to how different aspects of class processes were in play, both Marxian class antagonisms based on economic factors, but also class as influenced by relational processes as intersected by other axes of difference.

A HISTORY OF MT. BALABAG BEFORE MINING

In the 1970s the former pioneering areas became strongholds of the New People's Army. In another result of migration, many peoples who had not been conquered by the Spanish found that their forest fallows and ancestral lands had been claimed by migrants as alienable public land. Others were tricked out of their land by settlers. The most common responses were either to adopt the culture of the newcomers or to retreat to remote hills (Krinks 2002:136).

What was to become the gold mining site of sitio Balabag was before the mid-1990s a difficult to access mountainous area covered with second generation forests and classified by the state as 'timberlands⁴⁴.' This 1953 government classification mandated that timberlands cannot be legally titled to any private individual (Borras 2006: 135). Mt. Balabag is comprised of three peaks and the name (given by the Subanen peoples) predates the American colonial era. Located then in the municipality of Diplahan (a designation that would later be contested by the neighbouring municipality of Bayog whence gold mining began) Balabag was very sparsely populated by "kaingin" (swidden) farmers of indigenous Subanen descent. Though "poor" from the point of view of having low levels of economic capital and modern commodities, my interview subjects reflect on these days as providing plentiful food with the land providing fruits, vegetables, and arable land for corn and rice production—though meat was always in short supply due to dwindling numbers of large game animals. Before the arrival of mining the area was known by two other names: sitio Misui and sitio Tinago. These two small hamlets of all together less than a couple dozen simple thatch roofed wood homes were less than 500 meters apart and about a square kilometre in area.

My most important key informants regarding the local history were three Subanen leaders (known as "timuay⁴⁵"), all of whom come from the region, and one of whom (timuay "Itim", who was also one of my two main local gatekeepers) was recognized by the state and municipal leaders as being one of the original pre-mining residents of Mt. Balabag. As timuay, it is one of their main duties to maintain knowledge of the history of their community. The following Balabag history was taken from my many interviews with them, augmented by papers written by Philippine academics (Lopez-Bernal 2010, Tigno 2006, Tan 2000).

⁴⁴ All land above eighteen degrees of slope (and all minerals found within) belongs to the state and is managed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (Broad 1995:323).

⁴⁵ "Timuay" is an honorific title given to Subanen community leaders. It an inherited title, but may be taken away by the community and given to another if they are not seen to be living up to the responsibilities of the title.

Before the 1970s many Subanen communities lived in the lowland areas of Diplahan and Bayog, many in the barangays and sitios near barangay Guinoman where many of the former small-scale miners (Subanen and non-Subanen) originated. Mount Balabag was part of their ancestral domain, but was not yet a place of residence. It was a place for hunting and where they conducted some of their religious rites. The Subanen preferred to live in the lowlands as these were fertile lands more suitable to farming. There they were able to harvest a modest surplus and had a system of trade with neighbouring communities. Beginning in the 1950s an influx of Visayan migrants entered the region (Tigno 2006, Tan 2000) and by the 1970s the settlers had driven out most of the Subanen from lowland areas (Lopez-Bernal 2010). This local history connects to the overall history of Mindanao post-independence when the Philippine government began organizing internal migration by Christians from the Visayas as recounted earlier.

My interviews with displaced former Balabag residents provided family accounts of this process. “Mrs. Langka” (from a barangay in the municipality of Bayog) shared a family history that was repeated by many: *“My [Visayan] parents came here in 1960. They came in search of land, of places to farm. Visayans from all over came here then. They were looking for opportunity.”* The migrants were mostly peasants and low level petit bourgeoisie (small to medium landowners, also called “middle peasants”) in search of greater opportunity. Mindanao was presented by the national government as a new start (much like the American West), where one could escape from the long established hacienda structures found in the rest of the country. In Diplahan and Bayog they discovered the fertile lands settled by the indigenous Subanen whose long and difficult history with outsiders⁴⁶ had created a culture that was wary of outsiders (Lopez-Bernal 2010). The timuays spoke of (interviews July 2014) how at first land was shared with the Visayans:

we have a culture of sharing, so when they came and wanted to plant we let them plant, just like we would our own people, but that didn’t mean that the land belonged to them... in the future when we need help they were supposed to help us.

The Visayans, having establishing this foothold, began the process of obtaining legal titles—a process the Subanen were unfamiliar with and so never undertook themselves. As more settlers arrived the Subanen began to feel the population pressure and became less open to simply sharing land, at this point they say that the outsiders began to offer money or trade. Here too the timuay reported that their people then did not understand that the remuneration offered was for the permanent transfer of the land, “we thought it

⁴⁶ As summarized in the above section “A Brief History of Zamboanga Peninsula.”

was just for a season or two”. In time this effectively displaced the Subanen from the lowlands and pushed them into the highlands where the land was less fertile and rice cultivation more difficult (interviews July 2014).

According to the stories shared by my Subanen respondents, the history of permanent human residence on Mt Balabag was quite recent. It began in the late 1970s with less than thirty families⁴⁷ from what are now the barangays (bordering Bayog) of Guinoman and Ditay in the municipality of Diplahan. In Balabag they lived as subsistence kaingin farmers who supplemented their agricultural work with the hunting of wild game, and domesticated fowl. Another local resident shared that when he was a child on Mt. Balabag there were no roads through the forest, one walked or took a horse, and the nearest town was a three to four hour walk away.

It was an ok life, we had what we needed, we had all kinds of fruit, rice, corn. Unlike now [summer 2014], it’s so difficult, we’re lucky to eat *kanin*⁴⁸ once a day, sometimes we only had bananas instead [...] Life was better then.

While the forest was able to provide adequate food and materials for shelter, they did not seek complete isolation. The Subanen had long been exposed to the technologies, commodities, and medicines of outsiders (from the Moros onwards) and found value in them. Despite their displacement from the lowlands the Balabag Subanen still engaged in regular trade with the settlers in the lowland community markets. Adult members of the community would make occasional trips to trade forest goods and surplus agricultural products for items they couldn’t produce themselves (interviews July 2014).

This was the state of affairs until the early 1980s (during the last years of the Marcos dictatorship) when increasing tensions between the state, the Muslim separatist guerrillas, and the communist guerrillas led to increased militarization in the region. Timuay Itim spoke to me about the hardship of this time for the residents of Mt. Balabag as both insurgents and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) would often pass through their community. The Subanen felt caught in the middle of a conflict and felt pressure from both sides. From the New People’s Army⁴⁹ (NPA) they were entreated for support citing agrarian reform and a support for indigenous sovereignty as their goals, and from the Armed Forces of the

⁴⁷ According to timuay Itim (interviews June-July 2014).

⁴⁸ The term “*kanin*” literally refers to rice, but was also used colloquially when speaking of the ground corn used as a rice substitute.

⁴⁹ The armed wing of the Philippine Communist Party.

Philippines (AFP) they were accused of being communist sympathizers⁵⁰. Both also sought support from their community in the form of encampment and supplies. Timuay Itim discussed how his father (he was still a teen then) provided food to both in hope of avoiding trouble.

My father would sell food to the NPA but begged them not to stay in the village because of what the AFP might think. The AFP would come too but they weren't as friendly, they would stay in our community even after we said we didn't want them to, and they would call us 'sympathizers.' We weren't NPA you understand, we didn't want trouble, but at least they would ask for food, and they would pay for it (interview June 2014).

Life for the Subanen of Balabag changed again after it became militarized. By the middle of the 1980s the small community became smaller still as many left to escape from military harassment. Some moved to other Subanen communities and some left for the lowlands to find paid work in settler communities⁵¹. For the latter group another rationale besides militarization became apparent in my interviews: they sought to escape not just the place of their community, but also the perceived limitations of the social space accessible to a Subanen. These individuals tended to be young men and women at the time and expressed discontent in the Subanen way of life which they saw as easily abused by the more powerful settlers. Many went to rural communities to become agricultural day labourers or found work as general labourers (for example in gravel mining or in small-scale gold mining sites). And some left for the urban centres to do work as domestic helpers (nannies and housekeepers), or as general labourers (e.g. in the construction industry), or even as members of criminal organizations.

"Norito" was one of these former Balabag residents that found an outlet for his discontent in criminal activity (interview June 2014). He recounts that it was in 1983 when the militarization hit a peak. These were the last years of the dictator President Marcos' rule. In that year his chief political rival Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino was assassinated upon his return to the country and there was a nationwide popular upswell in anti-Marcos sentiment. This period saw a nationwide growth in support for organizations like the NPA who advocated for the overthrow of the state through armed revolution (Capuyan 2006). In response the government intensified its anti-insurgency campaign that targeted indigenous communities as they were seen as one of the prime recruiting grounds for a revolutionary movement with an agrarian reform agenda. Norito's family was one of those approached and while he claims that they did not join the cause, they thought their goals amenable and sold food to passing rebels.

⁵⁰ The Moro separatists were more active in muslim communities.

⁵¹ While Visayans remain the majority migrant group, there are also individuals originally from other parts of the archipelago.

In response AFP units were regularly sent to their home and sometimes camped there for weeks. These units would take what they wanted and were seen as rude by the Subanen. Norito also said that for the women of the community there were also issues of harassment, but he was reluctant to provide details.

In 1986 (before the “People Power” uprising that deposed Marcos), Norito’s family decided to leave Balabag for a neighbouring province where they had family. Norito himself did not join them and instead choose to relocate to an urban centre. As a young man in his late teens he felt anger and shame in his indigenous identity, an identity he saw as weak and easily abused. Norito went to join settler culture so that he too “could be strong.” In that city he joined one of the drug syndicates producing and distributing “shabu” (methamphetamine) which was (and continues to be) the most popular street drug in the Philippines⁵² (Urada et al 2014: 139). This work provided him not only a regular income of PhP150/day⁵³, but also an outlet for his anger and the feeling of power and respect. Norito shared this tale with me in quiet tones, his voice tinged with sadness. He claims that eventually the work wore on him as he came to identify with lower income people of all ethnic backgrounds being taken advantage of and made sick with the drug. In those years he himself had also become a user, and he realized how his earnings were being either returned to the syndicate to support his habit or spent on other social vices like gambling, drinking, and women. Worse, he shared that he began to realize that even here his Subanen identity was being taken advantage of. Many of the front-line ‘gunmen’ were Subanen, he recalled, and they were involved in hold-ups and kidnappings for the benefit of the syndicate elites. He left the work in 1989 because he says “I realized it wasn’t good work, that I was being used there too, I didn’t get rich like I thought, only the Visayan bosses got rich.” He rejoined his family, married, and sought to reconnect with his Subanen culture.

Marcos’ presidency fell to a popular uprising in 1986, and in the years following the regional NPA suffered a major downturn in its membership and supporters (Abinales 2008). This combination of factors led to a reduction in militarization and by the late 1980s to early 1990s many of the Subanen who departed Balabag returned. During this period the community sought to formalize their land rights to Balabag. In 1985 the Subanen residents of Balabag (including those that left) had made an attempt to apply for land

⁵² An estimated 65% of all substance abusers use “shabu” with an estimated 6% of the population report using it annually—the highest in the world (Urada et al, 2014: 139).

⁵³ According to the Central Bank of the Philippines (BSP) \$1USD = PhP20.3857 in 1986. In 2014 \$1USD = PhP44.3952 (<http://www.bsp.gov.ph>)

title but were denied due to the land being formally classified as “timberlands⁵⁴” which restricted private ownership. And so, despite their return, their lack of formal land ownership would foreshadow the issues to come when small-scale mining arrived in 1994.

The history of the Subanen from pre-colonial times, to their migration to Balabag, up to the arrival of gold mining in the mid-1990s demonstrates how great changes to their socioeconomic and cultural lives were interwoven into the interplay of multiple scales of influence. In the more recent history it can be traced to the geopolitics of the granting of post-war formal independence to the Philippines on the basis of neocolonial globalization, to attempts to solidify state control of resources and people, to the local level power play between new migrants and indigenous peoples. The lives of the Subanen people of Balabag have been a reaction to and a reaction against multi-scalar power relations.

⁵⁴ Timuay Itim later shared with me that in 2011 they were finally awarded “stewardship” which gave them legitimate legal claim but was still a step away from full legal title (and different still from a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title which would provide the land protection under the Indigenous People’s Rights Act).

CHAPTER FIVE

SMALL-SCALE MINING IN BALABAG

In this chapter I will chronologically explore the lifespan of small-scale mining in Balabag from the initial discovery of gold deposits, to the creation of the mining community, to its ultimate end when in the autumn of 2012 government agencies forcibly implemented a cease and desist order (CDO) and displaced the community. Within this journey I will explore the agrarian transformation that occurred when semi-feudal agricultural production was replaced by “gold rush” artisanal mining. This transformation gave birth to a new elite and created new class formations, and it also engendered new conflicts. This new mining community, composed mostly of men, arose on lands inhabited by a small population of indigenous Subanen who had been pushed out of the lowlands only two decades previous by Filipino settlers from the Visayas and beyond. And though during the lifespan of SSM socioeconomic mobility was experienced by many (mostly in the sense of increased earnings, but also to a smaller extent improvements in class position), there was at the same time a disincentive towards productive investment that limited long term mobility. A culture associated with masculinist “gold rush” mining emerged, one where expendable income was put into social vices that were seen as expressions of “manliness.” All this laid the foundation for the return of the majority involved in SSM to their pre-mining class positions after the land was claimed by TVIRD, the local subsidiary of the Canadian transnational mining company TVI-Pacific.

THE DISCOVERY OF GOLD

The tale of how gold was discovered on Mt. Balabag was shared by a variety of sources and shared one element in common: gold was discovered by a Subanen. Most of those that shared this tale knew only that one aspect, though there were four informants that claimed to know more. Two were of Visayan background, two of Subanen background. Three (the two Visayan and one of the Subanen) were once part of the MOSSMA leadership or staff. The remaining Subanen was Mrs. Bale, the wife of the individual, known to all by his nickname “Tulabong,” who all agreed made the discovery⁵⁵. She was also able to show me tattered documents with letterhead from the Municipality of Bayog that testified to her version of the story. For the two Visayans, who recounted an identical story, a Subanen hunter (Tulabong) accompanied by a Visayan friend co-discovered gold by accident. For Mrs. Bale, Tulabong was a part-

⁵⁵ These are not aliases as their names are common knowledge.

time prospector⁵⁶ who sought out new areas for SSM and had his biggest success on Mt. Balabag. And in contrast to the other account, he was not accompanied by a Visayan co-discoverer, but by Mrs. Bale. This is an important distinction as the “Visayan friend” (who was unnamed in our interviews) was supposed to be a small-scale miner from one of the rod mills in nearby Depore (the precursor to Balabag SSM)—thus his presence would have given equal claim to a non-Subanen for the discovery.

Here was how the tale was recounted by “Ginto” (who would eventually become one of the “Magic Six”—the term given by locals to the six richest mine owners and financiers in Balabag). The story began with a recollection that SSM already operated in the nearby barangay of Depore, but it was an operation fraught with problems due to its geographic location in a valley:

There wasn’t mining on Balabag yet, just in the Depore area... mining was kind of slow there because of large water deposits. Draining the tunnels was hard work, so the earnings were low. Many left. Some, they went wherever there was SSM... There came a time that an IP and his [Visayan] friend were hunting [for pig] in a part of Balabag. There they saw some interesting rocks at a landslide... [the Visayan friend] took some and brought it to [the SSM mills in Depore and it was discovered] that the rocks had gold. So there it was. Some of the people went up, then slowly more people. ... [That IP] was [called] Tulabong, that was his name (interview July 2014).

I spoke with Mrs. Bale in her simple, sparsely furnished, two room wooden home in barangay Depore (Bayog). By the one rough hewn wooden table we sat on well aged plastic chairs which had broken multiple times only to be repaired with rope stitching together the cracked pieces. A light breeze came in through the glassless windows from the rice fields behind the home (fields that her family did not own). At that time her income came from occasional agricultural day labour (she claimed earnings of just over Php700 a month). She spoke to me of how her husband was employed as a civilian armed force geographical unit (CAFGU)⁵⁷ member, but was also a prospector who used his job’s travelling nature to hunt for possible mine sites. In her story he was not with a Visayan but with her. He was home from his job and they were collecting rattan from the mountain to sell in the local market when they came across the exposed ore. He recognized right away that this was potentially gold bearing and so they collected samples for testing. Her story is corroborated by a document she showed me titled “Balabag Mining:

⁵⁶ Tulabong was also a member of the CAFGU (Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit) once assigned to Canatuan, the site of TVIRDs first LSM in Zamboanga Peninsula.

⁵⁷ CAFGU are civilian armed forces under the auspices of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. They are used to augment the AFP in conflict areas in order that the government soldiers need not be stretched too thin.

Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow (A Development Plan).” The letterhead states that it was an official document from the Municipality of Bayog, and was written by MOSSMA, though there was no date on it. Below is a transcript of the opening section under the heading “The Discovery” *[note that I did not correct all the grammar or spelling as I was uncertain in some places]*:

After the closure of operations of the Depore Small Scale Miners Association (DSSMA) in Upper Depore, Depore, Bayog, Zamboanga del Sur in 1993 the minors *[I believe this should be “miners” and is corrected as such in the remainder]* from the area started to explore the neighbouring [sitios] hoping to look for new venture to mine. When the DSSMA stopped its operations, other [miners] return to their old livelihood that was outing and gathering rattan from the forest for marketing.

One Subano resident of Depore, Bayog, Zamboanga del Sur named Tulabong whose real name is Reynaldo Bale *[“Bale” is typed over a whited out section]* happen to spot a landslide at the side of the mountain in sitio Misui, Depore, Bayog, Zamboanga del Sur. He noticed on the rack the gold vein and got [a] few samples and brought to the mi-mine area for a test load. It was found out that it [had] potential for mining and this accidental discovery inspired the [miners] to venture in the said place.

People [flocked] to the area and started to dig tunnels for that purpose. It was May 1994 that the area was full with miners and rod mills were constructed at sitio Misui [located on Mt. Balabag]. There was rapid production of gold in that month of May. Today the Araw ng Balabag was set on every May 27 yearly to commemorate the discovery.

The similarities and the direct knowledge of the name of Tulabong as the discoverer by so many parties seem to indicate that there was a core of truth to the story, but the conflict between the two versions hinted at the relationship between the settlers and the Subanen. The Subanen in general, often repeated the feeling of being cheated—not only of their lands, and the credit of discovery, but also of monetary compensation for both. The axis of ethnic difference that separated settlers and the indigenous people can be seen as an example of the embodied cultural capital (viewed as negative and/or problematic by settlers, and sometimes internalized by Subanen individuals themselves as seen in the previous chapter).

THE FIRST MINERS

At first, the mine site on Mt. Balabag was simply the successor of the small scale mining operation in Depore (organized under DSSMA since 1989) which had renamed itself the Balabag Small Scale Miners Association (BASSMA) in 1995. BASSMA's control over Balabag was short-lived as they lacked the necessary capital to truly grow the capacity of the new site. This left the door open to outside investors capable of the upfront capital expenses. Production in Depore was low yield and after operating costs and the repayment of loans, the producers earned only marginally more than the peasant farmers of the region. These economic constraints also constrained mobility in class position. Soon capital rich individuals (relative to the BASSMA miners) arrived, and within months BASSMA was dissolved and the Monte de Oro Small Scale Miners Association (MOSSMA) rose to replace it.

The following recounts how MOSSMA came to be and is based on interviews with “Ginto⁵⁸” and “Yibe” (who worked with the MOSSMA leadership). Yibe's life experiences gave her unique insight to the history of the region's mining. A college educated engineer, she had been employed by an international mining company prospecting at Mt Balabag after small-scale miners discovered gold in the region. Later Yibe would come under the employ of MOSSMA as an advisor. Their names and identities are obscured as much as is possible in this paper as after demolition they both believed their lives to be threatened⁵⁹. Ginto was the forerunner to the eventual Balabag mining elite, collectively given the moniker the “Magic Six”—the six individuals, all of whom were friends or family, who became the top financiers and owners of the majority of plants, refineries, and mining tunnels.

Ginto did not occupy a high class position, nor was she from one of the regional elite families, but relative to the BASSMA miners she had notable advantages. She had the benefit of coming from a minor petit bourgeoisie family with small land holdings and a small rice buying/selling business (recall that the Diplahan municipal office cited these businesses as one of the key problems for local farmers' own development). Ginto had a college education in a skilled professional field, but like many other graduates, had little to no opportunities to ply those skills. Balabag presented her with a rare opening, a temporal window of opportunity presented by the discovery of an easily exploitable resource on land that was as yet

⁵⁸ Due to alleged threats to the lives of some of the top MOSSMA leaders and employees (including Yibe and Ginto) I am trying to keep as much of their identities hidden. This means that in the case of Ginto, some aspects of all the four MOSSMA elite members I interviewed will be amalgamated onto her story, as explained in chapter three.

⁵⁹ MOSSMA released allegedly “leaked” TVIRD emails in 2012 that claimed a “target” list that included MOSSMA officials. Further, claims of political killings of SSM supporters in 2012 added to the tensions felt by many of the former miners.

only claimed by indigenous peoples with no land title. A site with as yet no major investors, but rich with SSM experience and labourers.

This presented Ginto with a decision that was only possible for individuals from an initial class position that provided her with enough capital (economic, cultural, and social) to be able to exploit an opportunity within the short time frame while the niche remained unfilled—and as discussed in the previous chapter, these openings were uncommon. The accumulated benefits of Ginto's class position were realized in classed performances that allowed her to use her social capital to establish a foothold in Balabag. It began with her transitioning from agricultural buying to gold buying. In doing so she created new classed relationships with the miners. And during the same period she sought out the necessary loans (from both financial institutions and, to a greater degree, from family and friends) to augment her economic capital so as to eventually set up and grow mining operations herself.

Ginto was respected by all my interview subjects and many shared a similar opinion of her as she had of herself: that hers was a “tough life” previous to SSM and that it was a ‘rags to riches’ story earned through “perseverance” and “sacrifice” (interviews July 2015). *“There were those with some money but they didn't know how to take advantage of it, how to make it grow, how to do it themselves”* (Ginto, interview July 2014). Over the course of a few years after college graduation she struggled (sometimes unsuccessfully) to become a success through increasingly larger investments. She began as the manager of her parents' rice trading business and eventually became one of the biggest capitalists in Balabag. I would argue that her class position alone (a petit bourgeoisie small business and land owner) was no guarantee of long term socioeconomic mobility. This can be seen in Ginto's initial SSM investment failure (which is a much more common story in most SSM sites in the region) that led to her returning to the agriculture business.

My parents they were rice traders, so when I was done school, it was me that took over. I did the travelling [to the rural farming communities], I did the buying of rice... so my parents they just handed over operations. So I saw that it wasn't enough, it wasn't enough for [my family to live on as I was now married and it was still my parents business so they had a big cut]. So when [SSM in] Dipuri [in the municipality of Bayog] began in 1991... that's where I went. ...my younger sibling took over [the rice trading].

[My spouse and I] sold [our home and land]... we scrimped and saved worked very hard, and I got a loan. I [began operating] a rod mill... but we stopped because it was slow because

there was a lot of water. So we lost [money there], there were no earnings. [I went back to farming by buying one hectare of land.]

[Four years later] that's when Balabag hit [when easily accessible, high yield ore was discovered]. I sold the land to a neighbour for a very good price [and began gold trading] (interviews July 2015).

To contrast Ginto's earnings, she claimed earnings of approximately PhP3000-4000 (gross) a week with rice trading compared to PhP30,000-50,000 (gross) in gold trading in Balabag.

That was... [in] 1994. I was able to buy gold, then I sold it [to the Central Bank] in Zamboanga. In one week I'd travel four times. So slowly there was some ball mills up there, and gold prices were up, so there came a time that someone offered me a ball mill⁶⁰... because he set it up but didn't go through with it, so he loaned me the drums and ball mill. So after that was the beginning. I was able to grow it. Then the operation expanded slowly. I would save, if there was a chance, I'd grow it. If there were those that wanted to sell, I'd take it. I made big loans from this Chinese who had faith in me. Then over time [I became what I became]... People know that I wasn't born rich (interview July 2014).

Ginto's rise in economic fortunes came from the confluence of her family's social, economic, and cultural capital along with the discovery of gold on Balabag. The site was in need for a major investor to maximize the operations at a time when the only other investors present were small-scale miners from previously low yield sites. Her entry into Balabag (along with the arrival of the rest of the Six) eventually filled the niche. This allowed Balabag SSM to flourish, but as we shall see, limited opportunities for the others that followed.

⁶⁰ Ball mills (also interchangeably called rod mills) are machines used in the final stages of the "gold amalgamation" technique. It is used to grind ore after it has been crushed manually by sledgehammers in order to facilitate the separation of gold. Here is the process as described by Israel and Asiro (2005:525):

"Lime and water are then added to the ore [in the rod mill], after which grinding commences. After several hours, the mill is turned off and mercury is mixed with the fine ore. Eventually, the milled ore is placed in a large basin, and the heavy metal alloy is allowed to settle to the bottom. Water is again added to the milled ore to remove the slurry, leaving behind the amalgam. The amalgam is then collected and placed in a fine cloth, which is squeezed to free excess mercury. Borax is often added to the amalgam as a cleaning material to remove impurities, and then blowtorched in a circular clay pot to separate the gold from the remaining mercury."

THE CREATION OF MOSSMA

The arrival of Ginto as the first major capital investor shaped the creation of a new power structure in the making of SSM in Balabag. Ginto invited family and friends to join her and these early investors, who later were named the “Magic Six” by the labourers, became the wealthiest and most influential in the community. Of the other five, three were friends or family of Ginto and the other two married into the Six. Though they all came from similar class positions, their earlier relationships had as much, if not more, to do with their becoming grouped as the elite. In this way we can see how class processes have bases beyond simply the labour process. This familiar support structure too can be connected to the semi-feudal nature of Philippine agricultural production which privileges familiar and patronage relationships. These six individuals became the main financiers to both the smaller mining capitalists, the main gold buyers, owned the largest refineries and the most productive tunnels, and up until the final years of operation held a monopoly on Carbon-in-Pulp (CIP) plant ownership.

Together the Six founded the Monte de Oro Small Scale Miner’s Association (MOSSMA) in early 1996 and officially registered with the Security and Exchange Commission (registration # G199700247) on 14 August 1997. Its earliest goal was to establish itself as the legal miners on Mt. Balabag. This first battle was lost when the national government approved an Mineral Production Sharing Agreement⁶¹ (MPSA) for Zamboanga Minerals Corporation (ZMC), an exploratory company working in partnership with Britian’s Rio Tinto mining company in late 1997. Despite this setback, for the first decade of its existence MOSSMA had some successes in dealing with local governments and received endorsements from the municipalities of Diplahan and Bayog⁶² towards recognition from the national government⁶³. At that time the local governments supported what they saw as a local initiative that provided more jobs to local peoples than LSM, and which paid their government’s business tax for the rod mills and CIP plants in operation (from unpublished research notes acquired from R. Junio of Ateneo University in July 2014, and from municipal summaries).

⁶¹ The MPSA (mineral production sharing agreement) is one of production agreements between the Philippine state and a transnational corporation under the Mining Act of 1995. The MPSA, approved by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), is given for up to twenty-five years, and is renewable for another twenty-five. It requires that no more than 40 per cent of the mineral project be owned by a foreign corporation (Holden et al 2011: 146).

⁶² These two municipalities had a boundary dispute as to which included Balabag within their borders. As such MOSSMA paid taxes and made legal appeals to both.

⁶³ These endorsements slowly eroded over time culminating with their turning full support over to TVIRD by 2012.

MOSSMA's other responsibilities, beyond being the official body to represent Balabag SSM in legal matters, was to regulate mining operations. Most critically this regulation was seen in its limiting of CIP plant and mining tunnel ownership. It also collected a local tax on mine owners for use in the construction of tailings ponds, in limited public works programs (including the installation of water pipelines from fresh water springs, and the eventual building of a local elementary school), and for public events (i.e. community celebrations during holidays). MOSSMA's mission statement set these goals:

[To] establish a progressive small scale mining industry with community support and a strong network with local government units, development agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations. [To] aspire to become [an] active promoter and advocate of "good practices" and better conceived approaches for meeting the poverty challenge and help build sustainable communities and sustainable local economies (MOSSMA powerpoint 2013).

In the periods before ZMC was awarded the MPSA in 1997, and again in between 2005 and 2009 when ZMC and TVIRD entered into an option agreement⁶⁴, MOSSMA attempted to create a "joint and cooperative" operation between SSM and LSM. Similar agreements had been made in sites in the Cordillera mountains in Luzon (CPA interview August 2014) where small-scale miners did the front line extraction and sold the ore to LSMs. A MOSSMA document explains that before ZMC acquired the MPSA,

... undertakings... [to resolve] the controversy was done by invoking a kind of understanding and application of the principle of "*peaceful coexistence*" where both small scale and the large scale [ZMC] (then only a claimant of a Declaration Of Location (DOL), [could] do their respective operation. There was an attempt [towards] a joint and cooperative operation of the small scale and large scale... (MOSSMA 2011⁶⁵).

A second attempt was made "[in the mid-2000s when our] lawyer... and the president of TVIRD, Eugene Mateo, met to create a compromise agreement. [...] We suggested a merger" (interview with one of the Six, July 2015). Both attempts failed.

⁶⁴ ZMC and TVIRD entered into an option agreement with the MPSA on 26 April 2005 which it exercised in 2008 for \$350,000, and by 2009 TVIRD had acquired 100% ownership and thus the license to explore and develop the contract area (www.tvird.com.ph).

⁶⁵ From a MOSSMA pamphlet entitled "MONTE DE ORO.... THE LAND, THE MINE, THE PEOPLE... still, the continuing struggle!" This was never published in any official media outlets but were distributed as pamphlets. Its intended audience were the government and local, national, and international NGOs and activist groups. Document obtained from a former MOSSMA official.

By 2011, at the height of its struggle against the incursion of TVIRD, it claimed to have had: more or less 200-250 operators⁶⁶ in various phases of mine operations (i.e. tunnels, rod-millers, processing, tradings, labor, etc.) and dependents of more than 5000 people including laborers earning daily compensation. Moreover, about seventy percent of the people employed and benefited the area were the Subanen... (MOSSMA, 2011⁶⁷).

The same document estimates 60-70 rod mills in operation, twenty productive tunnels, fifty sari-sari shops, and an expanded value chain that included jewellery makers.

THE REPRESENTATION AND REALITIES OF SSM “SUCCESS”

Since the time of the Small Scale Miners’ legitimate occupation in the area as “builders or possessors in good faith” over the area at Balabag, and pursuant to its rights and privileges under the law (R.A. 7076) and corollary law, the PD 1899, it envisioned to *establish a progressive small scale mining industry with community support and strong network of miners, communities, local government units, development agencies and Non-Government organizations, seeking to become a more active promoter and advocate of “good practices” and better conceived approaches for meeting the poverty challenge and building the basis for more sustainable communities* [bold and italics theirs] (MOSSMA 2011⁶⁸).

The above is from an informational English language pamphlet that MOSSMA released in defence of its operations in 2011 targeted towards a government, media, and NGO audience. This was distributed during a critical period in its battle against the entry of TVIRD as preparations for the May 2012 national and local elections were underway and local government support was moving towards the LSM. MOSSMA had applied to convert their operations into a “Minahang Bayan” (People’s Mine) as per the small scale mining law RA 7076, and TVIRD was still trying to enforce the legality of the MPSA it

⁶⁶ The term “operators” in this sense refers to owners of mining capital. The same term (operators) is also used to refer to the employees hired to operate the rod mills as shall be discussed later.

⁶⁷ From a MOSSMA pamphlet entitled “MONTE DE ORO.... THE LAND, THE MINE, THE PEOPLE... still, the continuing struggle!” Document obtained from a former MOSSMA official.

⁶⁸ From a MOSSMA pamphlet entitled “MONTE DE ORO.... THE LAND, THE MINE, THE PEOPLE... still, the continuing struggle!” Document obtained from a former MOSSMA official.

purchased from Zamboanga Minerals Corporation. This pamphlet was quite telling as to how the organization wished to be viewed and how it viewed itself. Balabag SSM was presented as a space where Filipinos were shaping development for the good of Filipinos, a place where initiative and entrepreneurship had created local success stories and lifted people out of poverty, and where the Goliath of “development aggression” by foreign companies was bravely faced by the David of a “people’s mining activity” (MOSSMA, 2011⁶⁹).

In an interview with one of the Magic Six, I was told that they were seen by the community as the “moral leaders” who worked for the good of the majority. I was told that:

many were able to benefit [in Balabag] because everyone was able to earn money. The Lord gave us Bayog, but not only for [the people of] Bayog, it's for the benefit of all Filipinos. [...] SSM and LSM are different. With SSM it doesn't matter who you were, if you were interested [in employment] and were hardworking, then it's ok. You would earn depending on how well you work. So even if—even if—you were someone with no knowledge [about mining], even if you had no education, as long as you're hard working, you'd earn. Unlike LSM, where if you don't have the technical ability or capabilities you won't get employed (interview July 2014).

And yet, in my own interviews the moral high ground was much less clear and seemed to have more commonalities to the story of capitalist exploitation of natural resources and people as described by Marxian theory. My research points to Balabag having produced a space that, while promoted by the local elites as a place of opportunity and development in the hands of Filipinos, remained a space of capitalist exploitation that primarily benefited the capitalist class (and among them primarily the elite).

SSM in Balabag was able to create some downstream industries but in my interviews these seemed limited to the small-scale jewellery makers that sold their products to individuals and small urban shops, and to producers of SSM equipment like rod mills and CIP plants. The latter was heavily dependent on the existence of productive SSM locations however, so the eventual end of MOSSMA and with no high yield sites having yet replaced it as of this writing, these businesses had either collapsed, or at the very least seriously declined. The production of jewellery too was hit as it was reliant on expendable income.

⁶⁹ From a MOSSMA pamphlet entitled “MONTE DE ORO.... THE LAND, THE MINE, THE PEOPLE... still, the continuing struggle!” Document obtained from a former MOSSMA official.

SSM in Balabag created new capitalist divisions of labour that differed from the semi-feudal agricultural system that dominated the countryside. This new form of capitalism favoured the select few who entered the nascent industry at just the right moment to allow them to trade their relatively higher economic, cultural, and social capital for control over the newly created economic space. In doing so they were able to take advantage of this newly opened niche and establish themselves as the new elite in a form that was derived from the power held by the semi-feudal landowner. Once this niche was filled they attempted to reestablished the dominant class hierarchies based on semi-feudal agrarian life. This resulted in smaller mine owners that were dependent on the financier, and labourers dependent on the mine owner. However unlike the large landowner, their power and control over the industry was less secure. The high capital requirements of SSM, with its use of expensive machinery, tools, and the daily expense of chemicals and explosives meant that capital costs had to be shared with second tier mine owners. And the wealth generated from that high yield site also resulted in even the working class earning significantly more than they would in agricultural labour. This created an opening for capital accumulation which eventually led to intra-class fragmentation that resulted in the degradation of elite control (as shall be seen in the section below).

SECOND TIER MINE OWNERS

My earlier example of “Ginto” provides an overview of the rise to power of the “Magic Six”. Ginto’s inability to find work in her field of study after graduating from college was representative of the challenges created by underdevelopment in the region. Despite a relatively privileged class background and high educational achievement her opportunities remained limited. It was only the opening of an (as yet) unexploited economic niche in SSM that allowed Ginto to trade on their class background and accumulated capital. It was this temporal dimension, in conjunction with their economic, social, and cultural capital, that helps us understand why they were able to take this elite position when others were not. Another part of the puzzle can be seen if we look beyond class positions as implied by one’s relationship to the means of production to other axes of difference, in the case of the Six, their familiar connections pre-Balabag SSM. In speaking with twelve former small mine owners from Balabag I discovered that the Six were not the only early arrivals with a similar class background, and yet none of the others succeeded in becoming part of the Six.

“Ibon's” story demonstrates some of the challenges to upward social mobility even for a petit bourgeois family. College educated and coming from a small landowning Visayan family with political aspirations, an electoral loss in their home community in a neighbouring province resulted in a significant

loss of social capital. Within a semi-feudal system that heavily leans on a culture of patronage, after the loss of the election their political opponents effectively made dealings with Ibon's family detrimental to other families wishing to maintain the needed good graces with the new political powers. This electoral loss pushed Ibon's family to leave their home province in the early 1990s and they resettled in a medium yield SSM mining community in another province (not yet in the Balabag area). There they set up a series of small businesses with savings from the sale of their land and small businesses in their original province. Unfortunately they overestimated the profits being generated by that SSM site and their new investments never earned as much as they had hoped: "We had all sorts of businesses, it was never permanent. At first we had a tailoring business, then we were agricultural buyer/sellers, we had a small store, we raised and sold small livestock, just a string of small businesses to make ends meet" (interview July 2014).

Having reached adulthood and married, Ibon and his spouse moved to Balabag in 1994 after news that a new and potentially more lucrative SSM site had been discovered. This was in that critical period when SSM required major investors to take a risk on the site, yet despite having a similar class background to the eventual Magic Six, Ibon's family did not invest capital into mining itself until 1999.

At first we started with just buying gold⁷⁰. If we were able to buy gold we'd sell it to a larger buyer, that's it. Because money was easy. Even if it was just PhP50 a gram (in profit), if you were able to buy ten then you had PhP500 right away! ... this was [from when we arrived] up to 1999 when I set up a ball mill. Earnings were easy. Even though gold was cheap, it was easy. We'd be able to buy twenty or thirty grams—where else could you get [that kind of money in] a day? That's why we stayed here. We bought land. We were able to save. We started with a house and land (interviews July 2014).

Ibon saw his move to Balabag as a success relative to his previous situation, but it is interesting to note the deviations in his story relative to Ginto's. Here we can see that class background alone did not mean equality in opportunity. In taking into account all three types of capital we can note that Ibon's recent family history led to weakened levels of social and economic capital. Ginto was able to gain the initial foothold in Balabag investments through a series of dealings that required the trading of land holdings and loans acquired through social networks. Ibon's parents' political difficulties severely disrupted these networks and constrained their social capital which limited his own ability to make similar moves.

⁷⁰ Ginto also began in Balabag as a gold buyer.

Ibon was not the only eventual smaller mine owner of similar class standing to the Six to arrive in Balabag prior to them. Their relegation to the second tier of local capitalists can be viewed through either a relative deficiency in one or more of the three types of capital, and/or simply due to hesitation. An example of the latter can be found in one of my interviewees who had higher levels of capital upon entry yet did not invest in mining due to having what seemed to them to be secure employment with a transnational LSM company. It was only after that transnational ended its Philippine operations that they scrambled to invest, and by then the Six had already entrenched themselves.

Further it was not only members of the petit bourgeois (middle peasant) class who became mine owners in Balabag. Over the course of SSM operations some enterprising mine labourers were also able to see class mobility. Timuay Itim, one of my key informants and original resident of Balabag, was in the last years of MOSSMA able to invest his accumulated earnings into mine ownership. The late investment timeframe of his story was repeated by some other labourer turned mine owners. And there were also miners turned tunnel operators. Though they were not able to threaten the overall power of the Six, nor were any ever able to join them within the elite, some did see economic independence relative to the agricultural life of the majority in region while within an active SSM industry in Balabag.

THE PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION OF CLASS

In this section I will examine how socioeconomic lives, class lines, and capital flows were produced and reproduced⁷¹. Derived from semi-feudal class relations an elite established themselves as the political and economic power in Balabag, however there were key differences from their agrarian origins. SSM was closer to capitalist than feudal and it allowed for more productive investment and for socioeconomic mobility up to a point, and primarily within its spaces. As noted in the above section there were some individuals who were able to rise from mine labourers to small owners (of independent tunnels, rod mills, and eventually even CIP plants).

SSM may be seen as a local attempt at disrupting the globalizing discourse that the Philippine state accepts and manifests in the semi-feudal nature of agrarian life. Contrary to the central government's support of LSM which my interviewees saw as only benefitting foreign companies and the Philippine elite, SSM in Balabag was seen, not only by MOSSMA but by the majority involved, as an attempt to create local development that acted in the best interests of the local people. Yet despite the lofty vision of

⁷¹ In the chapter following this I will explore the long term outcomes that resulted from Balabag after it was claimed by TVIRD. There I will inquire as to how many of the 'successes' seen in Balabag were able to be maintained without the lucrative SSM community.

an egalitarian space, its production of social and economic space was based on a capitalist mode of production and brought with it the class conflict and exploitation inherent in that system. The economic nationalism discourse presented by MOSSMA, while providing for increased opportunities for socioeconomic mobility within that specific SSM community, remained limited in its ability to affect large scale regional development.

As Philip Kelly (1997:153) wrote, “rather than viewing the local and global, or place and space, as distinct scales, they should instead be seen as ‘nested’”. Within this nested viewpoint the lack of support on a state level for SSM, and the constant threat of Balabag’s takeover by the local subsidiary of Canada’s TVI-Pacific was a ticking clock counting down to the end of MOSSMA operations. These multiscalar influences helped shape the form capitalism took, and the consciously or not, helped inform the motivations of the different actors within.



Figure 1.4: An image of the mountain range connected to Mt. Balabag (which is obscured by the trees on the right).

AGRARIAN TRANSFORMATIONS

The economic system of the Philippines was shaped throughout the colonial period and legitimized in the modern day through neocolonial policies established post-independence and consistently reaffirmed through trade agreements both on state to state and intrastate levels. The national elite also tend to be the largest landowners and use this to control the export-based economy, this is the basis for their political power. This has been the political economy of the nation since independence (Krinks 2002). Thus at its core class divisions in the country remain embedded in land ownership:

In lowland rural areas, then, a hierarchical social system of tenancy and subtenancy was established that fostered an elite class of land-owners and various subordinate classes of farmers and peasants. American rule (1898-1946), emerging from the Spanish-American war in the late 19th century, enhanced this class structure as lands controlled by the religious orders were distributed among provincial elites. A social hierarchy based essentially on land ownership was thus reaffirmed and given new political legitimacy through the electoral system in the early twentieth century. This highly inequitable social structure persists today, although supplemented by a growing middle class and new wealth in the industrial and service sectors (Kelly 1997:155).

Previous to SSM on Balabag the majority of those involved (from top financiers to the labourer) were involved in agricultural production, with the majority being landless peasants who performed agricultural labour for landowners or indigenous Subanen with a subsistence economy based on swidden agriculture. Similar to much of the remote rural areas of the country, the region retained what the Marxian inspired Philippine Left call a “semi-feudal” mode of production (Aguilar 1989, Putzel 1995) referring to the major class division between the landowners and peasants. Elements of feudalism remained within the system while at the same time being embedded in an overall system of imperialist capitalism. While peasant day labourers did receive wages and so were technically ‘proletarian,’ their limited education and skill set made agricultural work the only employment most were able to acquire, and so they retained many feudalistic elements to their class, which was why I retain the usage of the term “peasant”. In writing about the peasantry as a class in the Philippines Tadem describes the peasant economy as “a form of incipient capitalism, represented by petit commodity production” (Tadem 2012:68). These poor peasants can also be subdivided into indigenous and non-indigenous groupings, with the indigenous being further subdivided into those that lived in rural lowland communities with setter families, and those who lived in the highlands in primarily Subanen communities. The highland Subanen had a mixed economy

that combined swidden agriculture with occasional day labour and the selling of highland goods at lowland markets to supplement their income.

The majority of the landowning families who became involved in SSM were small landowners relative to the larger hacienda owning families, and correspondingly had much less capital. These were what Lenin called the “middle peasants⁷²” and were classified as precarious petit bourgeois elements in threat of being transformed into a wage-working rural proletariat (Tadem 2012:71). In the Diplahan and Bayog areas my interview respondents (both from the peasants and land-owners) estimated the land assets of most landlord families under twenty hectares, with many (including all those who eventually became mining capitalists in Balabag) owning under ten. Most of the top mining capitalists in Balabag were not only small landowners but also had small businesses prior to mining, the most common being the produce buyer/sellers who roamed the rural interior in trucks to buy from farms. These products were then sold to the large agricultural businesses of the regional elite, the large rice mills and agricultural industries. It was in this environment that small landowning petit bourgeois families like that of Magic Six found an opportunity in mining to rise above their pre-Balabag socioeconomic stations.

For the most part the initial mine owners in Balabag tended to come from petit bourgeois small landowning families, while the vast majority of the mine labourers came from poor peasant and/or indigenous families. Beyond class positions and levels of higher economic capital, the small landowning families (middle peasants) tended to have higher educational levels, with most having attended at least some college, as well as having had better social network connections. The poor peasant labourers had low levels of educational completion with the majority having not completed elementary school, and their poor social networks made them more reliant on finding local benefactors—which as we shall see, helped recreate within SSM some of the feudalistic elements found in agricultural work.

The maturing of SSM in Balabag developed with it a combination of major changes to the class standing of the “Magic Six”, and increased economic capital for the majority. After the establishment of the Six a glass ceiling formed that blocked attempts to crack the upper tier, but other petit bourgeois middle peasants were able to earn improved livelihoods, and even some labourers were eventually able to rise to the ranks of small mine owners. Contrary to life under semi-feudal agrarian production, my interviewees tended to agree that life under SSM was improving. At the least economic capital was being earned at significantly higher rates, and over the course of the almost twenty years of SSM on Balabag

⁷² Lenin in analyzing rural conditions in the late 19th century noted a “peasant differentiation”: the well-to-do peasants, the middle peasants, and the poor peasants. The rich peasants were a rural capitalist class while the poor peasants were transformed into a wage-working rural proletariat.

socioeconomic mobility⁷³ was experienced— so that even former poor peasants turned mine labourers were able to become small mine owners themselves. It was the indigenous Subanen that found upward mobility the most difficult to traverse, but here too a small number were able to improve their class standings within SSM.

These capitalist success stories somewhat mirrored the process of historical primitive accumulation when the commons were seized by capitalist interests, and the labour power of peasants forced into the market (Marx, *Capital*, Part VIII, Chapter XXVI). In Balabag the merchant classes (here led by the petit bourgeois “Six”) transformed themselves into new extractive capitalists through the dispossession and capitalization of the land of the indigenous Subanen community living on Mt Balabag. The new SSM enterprise attracted poor peasants from across the region hoping to find more lucrative salaried work in the mines—the class relationship was transformed from peasant-landowner to mine owner-labourer, and it retained elements of that semi-feudal past.

To put an economic context to earnings in SSM, two members⁷⁴ of the Magic Six personally estimated that by 2011 (the year before the end of SSM on Balabag) up to 20 percent of the establishments were owned by their family. They estimated that at a minimum they earned a *net* Php10 million (\$280,000 Cdn) a month in personal gold sales alone (further earnings came from interest payments on loans, the buying of gold from other miners, and other business dealings). Conversations with second tier owners put their monthly *gross* earnings at up to two or three million. This was on very rare occasions and for only the largest of the small mine owners, most earned much less. Though they added that their expenses, especially in terms loan repayments, reclaimed a majority of that income. Labourers on the other hand estimated earnings from Php6000 to 10,000 a month, though for tunnel miners this figure rose in excess of Php200,000 a month with a “lucky strike”. These earnings should be contrasted to the regional average monthly income of agricultural workers of Php2800⁷⁵.

⁷³ “Mobility” in the sense of improvement within Kelly’s multi-dimensional concept of ‘class’ and relatedly in life chances and perceived quality of life. While this was not a universal improvement, it was perceived by respondents to have been much improved over the previous agricultural lives they lived.

⁷⁴ A married couple.

⁷⁵ Php1000 = \$21 Cdn approx.

DIVISION OF LABOUR

Before I enter into a discussion of the class divisions and the class conflict that arose in Balabag let me quickly introduce the division of labour that made up economic activity in Balabag. Most of the work was done by men. In this “gold rush” site most of the population did not consider this their “home” and left their families in their communities of origin in the lowlands⁷⁶. In the brackets next to job titles I list the number of interviews conducted with each.

- 1) The **Financiers** (5)⁷⁷ provided capital financing to all the lower levels, from providing large scale loans (up to millions of pesos) to investors wanting to open plants and mills, to smaller loans to the labourers. This latter category worked as cash advances given every month to the different types of workers. This advance came in the form of both cash or in-kind support. The in-kind advance was provided by the local shops/restaurants owned by the financiers who would tally items ‘purchased’ and have that amount deducted from their monthly earnings⁷⁸. Often workers were also housed in the buildings of financiers and thus a monthly room and board was also deducted. The biggest financiers in Balabag were the Magic Six, though there were also approximately twenty smaller financiers who were made up of both the top second tier mine owners and some outsiders that arrived in Balabag when it became widely known to be highly profitable. These outside financiers were seen by many to be taking advantage of the less fortunate as they charged higher levels of interest than the Six.
- 2) The **CIP Plant Owners** (16)⁷⁹ had the ability to refine mine waste (from their own mills or from another mill owner who did not own a plant of their own). This used the Carbon-in-Pulp (CIP) process of gold extraction from the waste products of the rod mill process. Until late in the lifespan of the Balabag SSM, MOSSMA limited ownership of plants to the Six which helped consolidate their power and wealth as plants provided the largest return of profit at the lowest expense. Rod mills were only able to extract 25 percent of the gold from the raw ore with the remainder lost in the waste material. This waste could then be reprocessed and extracted through the use of CIP plants. The Six each owned and operated between ten to thirty plants. It was only in 2010 when MOSSMA finally

⁷⁶ There were some exceptions as some women did come up to work as well, and there were women mine owners and financiers, and of course there was the original Subanen population. However, the vast majority of the population at any given time was male.

⁷⁷ The numbers in the brackets indicate how many of the interviewees were from each category.

⁷⁸ Prices were often inflated and were cheaper to buy independently for those not reliant on financing for their daily needs.

⁷⁹ Most of these owners were only able to invest in CIP plants beginning in 2010.

allowed other mine owners to operate CIP plants of their own. By the time TVIRD claimed the site in the fall of 2012 no other owner had more than three. It was estimated by one (non-Six) CIP plant owner that the cost for the equipment to set up a plant was approximately PhP200,000.

- 3) The **Rod Mill Owners** (16)⁸⁰ were the most common type of local mining capitalist. By Fall 2012 one MOSSMA insider estimated that there were approximately eighty mill owners. Compared with financing and plant ownership this was the most fraught with risk and had the smallest profit margin. A rod mill basically uses a series of encased cast iron drums that machine tumble (much like a washing machine drum laying on its side) with metal rods inserted to crush ore into a powder. Once in this sandy state, mercury was added to collect the gold, and this product was then finished with a blowtorch to separate the metals. As outlined above, only 25 percent of the gold was captured by the use of mercury in the milling process, leaving a majority of the gold in the waste product. Equipment for milling was also very expensive and in need of regular replacement due to the erosiveness of the milling process. Add to this the expense of mercury and the unpredictability of the quality of ore from the various tunnels in the region and the risks for mill owners pile up. Interviews with owners had a common complaint that if their mill operator (the labourer who runs the machines) was inexperienced or careless, expenses could easily outweigh gains through the abuse of machinery or overuse of mercury (which was very expensive). The estimated cost for ten of the milling drums (where the ore was crushed) was PhP1.5 million pesos, and these needed to be replaced every six to eight months. The Six each operated two to three hundred drums, while the other operators normally had no more than sixty. Rod mill and plant owners tended to also own the tunnels, though there were independent tunnel owners (I don't include this as a separate category as I was only able to interview one independent tunnel owner).
- 4) The **Labourers** (25)⁸¹ make up the largest number and had the most differentiation. There were eight types that fall into this category.
 - a) The **tunnel miner** (13) ("abantero") did the physical labour of working underground in the tunnels. They dug out large chunks of ore with a combination of explosives and manual tools. There were approximately eighty to one hundred productive tunnels (and hundreds more that were unproductive) by 2012 according to MOSSMA officials. Up to one hundred and fifty abantero worked each tunnel (in shifts). The range of expected monthly earnings was between PhP9000 to

⁸⁰ Some of these Mill owners were former labourers and thus were only able to invest in a rod mill in the last years of SSM on Balabag.

⁸¹ Some of the labourers I spoke with did not specify their specific task, and there was also overlap as some labourers did multiple jobs over their time in Balabag.

PhP50,000, however on large ore strikes this number could go beyond PhP200,000. The amount earned was based on a 40:60 split between miner and financier based on the amount of gold (and other precious metals) gathered in the rod milling process⁸².

- b) The “**atrasero** (1)” was the hauler of rocks out of tunnel to a nearby collecting area. Each tunnel had approximately five to thirty haulers. They earned PhP25 per sack of ore they brought out and could earn up to PhP500 a day. This was one of the jobs mostly occupied by transient workers, those coming to Balabag for a short time period to supplement their agricultural income and by the physically weaker members of the community (the elderly, women, and even children).
- c) In collecting areas, “**breakers** (4)” would use manual tools to break the rocks into smaller pieces. They earned the same amount as the atrasero, approximately PhP25 per sack of crushed ore. They could earn up to PhP500 a day. From there the ore would be transported to the rod mill. This was another of the jobs mostly occupied by transient workers and by the physically weaker members of the community.
- d) Rod mill “**operators** (4)” were charged with operating the machines that made up the first step of the refining process (as mentioned previously, this process extracted 25 percent of the metals found in the ore). They would ensure the machines were working optimally, and were responsible for milling process and the adding of mercury in the final stage to collect the metals. They earned PhP500-P1000 per twenty four hour shift, depending on experience. They worked alternating shifts and earned PhP7500 to 15,000 a month.
- e) **Cargo transporters** (10) (“kargadors”) did the heavy labour of bringing goods to Balabag from the barangays below. As an isolated sitio that had no road access for most of its lifespan, the early transporters used manual labour to physically carry everything from foodstuffs to the materials and equipment needed for mining. They used a device that distributed the weight of each load (approximately fifty to two hundred pounds depending on the capability of the carrier) on their necks, shoulders and backs. They earned approximately PhP250-500 per trip (the hike from the lower barangays to Balabag took approximately three hours). After 2008 a road was constructed by the exploration teams of TVIRD which MOSSMA also used until 2011 when the road was closed to them and manual transport again became the norm.
- f) The “**Peace Guard** (0),” were the internal armed security employed by MOSSMA. Their role was to protect ore stocks from the workers. Stolen ore benefitted the ‘thief’ as it could be sold to a different owner thereby not being “deducted” for financing. There were approximately eighty to one hundred in Balabag, approximately one per tunnel. They had their room and board paid for and were given a monthly commission of PhP10,000 paid for my MOSSMA. Despite their name,

⁸² This is similar the the “usual” sharing scheme as presented in an article on bulaltat.com, and better than the 30:70 split in SSM on Mt.Diwalwal (Rey and Saturay 2005:13)

they were not officially the community police. It should be noted that while in interviews with MOSSMA they maintained that the guard was limited to small caliber arms like single shot shotguns, when the government forces raided Balabag to close down SSM in 2012 they claimed to have discovered thirteen high powered firearms including an M-16 rifle and KG9 submachine gun (Mindanao Examiner 2013). Interviews with some labourers did confirm that they were aware that the large financiers protected their compounds with high-powered firearms, though they did not elaborate further.

- g) And finally there was the “**monitoring team (0).**” They were a specialized team that were tasked with quality control for the processed ore to be sold outside the community. They tended to have other jobs as well and were selected based on the trust of the MOSSMA administration. They were given a monthly commission of PhP6000.



Figure 1.5: The SSM community on Balabag (photo courtesy of MOSSMA).

OTHER LIVELIHOODS IN BALABAG

I should also note that other forms of entrepreneurship and employment existed in Balabag. The most common other types requiring relatively large capital include: owners of large general stores (some of these “sari-sari” stores were colloquially referred to as “department stores” in some interviews due to their size and the range of products available), restaurants/bars (also colloquially referred to in interviews as “videoke bars”), and gold buyer-sellers. On the lower end of the spectrum there were also individual roving vendors of foodstuffs (cooked and raw), and the usual small “sari-sari” community shops usually accessed from a window of a private home. There also existed a strong black market for illegal vices (e.g. drugs, prostitution, and the illegal lottery (“jueteng”). There was some overlap between all these forms of entrepreneurship, as for example many general store owners were also small gold buyers, and the top capitalists also had general stores. But there were also many independent business people (e.g. the videoke bar owners) who came to Balabag after it became profitable to find a niche of their own. MOSSMA officials I spoke with distanced their operations from large alcohol-serving establishments as they were also known for their connections to prostitution and drugs.

Gold buyers were an important part of this chain. At the top were the Magic Six who required gold to be sold to them by those they financed and who also bought gold from the smaller gold buyers in the community. The small gold buyers would buy from local miners who either were not part of a financier-miner relationship, or who wanted to bypass the relationship and sell gold obtained ‘illegally’ from work they did for a financier. The top gold buyers reported that they would transport the gold to be sold to the Central Bank of the Philippines (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP)) in Zamboanga or Davao cities. “Black market” trading was not reported to me by any interview respondents though this does not mean that it did not exist. There were reports of independent gold buyers that periodically visited Balabag though as they were not local I was not able to speak with any of them. In other SSM sites in central and southern Mindanao it has been reported that,

Black market traders would usually visit the community or are based in the community. Purchase price is lower in the black market but the miners save the cost of transportation in going to [sell to the BSP]. Sometimes, the owners of processing plants are part of the black market. Because of the savings in transportation, miners are encouraged to sell their gold to the black market (AFRIM 2012:14).

CLASS STRUGGLE

SSM in Balabag represented itself as a space where hard workers found success, as a 2011 MOSSMA pamphlet outlining the benefits of SSM noted,

there are already numbers of local people who have accumulated wealth and improved their living conditions, expanded and diversified their investments or businesses and thereby also helped other people through employment in the different business endeavours that they have entered into outside the mine site (MOSSMA 2011⁸³).

Yet along side this official line of thought it was common for most of my interviewees, labourers and owners alike, to recognize that (as one small owner adeptly told me), “in Balabag it was about capital, if you had big capital you made big earnings. If you had money you made money, but you need the capital” (interview July 2015). Balabag helped release individuals from the agricultural semi-feudal system, but it ushered in new forms of capitalist antagonism resulting in class struggle.

In discussing class struggle it should be kept in mind that I am not merely using the traditional Marxian definition of ‘class’ (referring to an individuals location within an economic order within the means of production). As discussed in chapter two, class is differentiated within the four dimensions of *position, process, performance, and politics* (Kelly 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). In doing this I will be able to examine the appearance of intra-class fragmentation (‘class’ here referring to class-as-position), as well as how different axes of difference (especially as regards ethnicity) can lead to class groupings different from that which would be found if limited to economic location. The relationships between classes, the class processes, will be seen as not only derived from class positions, but created through the construction of another forms of difference.

THE MAGIC SIX vs SMALL MINE OWNERS

Despite their personal views of themselves as “moral leaders⁸⁴” and as a boon to the community, the Six—as the established local bourgeois elite—sought (by nature of their class interests) to control the top means of production and thus their abilities to maximize profit. This included intra-class fragmentation

⁸³ From a MOSSMA pamphlet entitled “MONTE DE ORO.... THE LAND, THE MINE, THE PEOPLE... still, the continuing struggle!” Document obtained from a former MOSSMA official.

⁸⁴ These is an exact quote from an interview with one of the Six on July 2014.

with the other mine owners. The shared class-as-position status of mine owners did not necessarily create commonality of interests, processes, and outcomes. Instead, having modelled SSM on the landowner-peasant relationship of the semi-feudal countryside, the Balabag elite⁸⁵ sought to maintain economic and political control of the most productive investments. The Six were able to gain early economic power through the advantages of being early big investors (and thus having a ‘head start’ in accumulating profits). They gained political control via leadership in MOSSMA *and* through successful election victories at the barangay level local government unit (LGU)⁸⁶. These political successes also demonstrated class-as-performance as they were able to take political power with the support of the community. These advantages helped the Six enforce and legitimize their dominance over the rest of the community, even (and maybe especially) over the small and medium mine owners.

The emergence of intra-class fragmentation between the elite and the other mine owners was based on a growing feeling of unfairness felt by the latter group as Balabag SSM matured. The medium and small owners (measured by the amount of investment into mining capital) expressed great frustration that despite their hard work and large capital investments they⁸⁷ tended to have left Balabag with millions in pesos of debt. They spoke of manipulation by the elite to frustrate their attempts at furthering their investments, and thus profits, during the years of small scale mining. While none would assign direct conscious blame (as in no one expressed any malicious intent by the Six), all (to varying extents) realized that limits to their success were imposed by the Six. This manipulation was mostly seen in the Six’s control of MOSSMA and MOSSMA’s restricting of CIP plant ownership to the elite, or as they call it “the top miners”. They also pointed to the lack of regulations on tunnel creation, elite control over sales of explosives and chemicals, and generally to the financier-financed relationship which tied purchases and sales to a single financier. MOSSMA’s management of SSM was also blamed for poor waste disposal which was seen to contribute to a damaged environment and local health issues. Many expressed a desire for stronger regulations but cited both a lack of knowledge about best practices, and not being able to go against the tide on their own as to do so as an individual would only hurt the ability to profit and to compete. Further, they reported to me that they saw these problems as part of why SSM lost its government support. There were many “*if only MOSSMA had*” statements in my interviews that point to a subtle jab at the elite who became extremely wealthy despite the difficulties faced by the other owners.

⁸⁵ The “Magic Six” individuals who were friends and family.

⁸⁶ A member of the Six always held the barangay captain position as well as kagawad (councillor) positions.

⁸⁷ This is based on the interviews I conducted within the communities I visited. I wish to note a limitation in that there may have been other smaller capitalists that succeeded that I never had a chance to interview. But with those I spoke to, they saw their stories as common.

I spoke of Ibon's family history earlier in this chapter, and her story was used as an example of a petit bourgeois family who entered Balabag before the establishment of the Six yet was unable to take a place in the community elite. In this section Ibon will also help highlight the issues faced by small and medium capitalists under the Six. Unlike Ginto, Ibon was unable to secure loans from a friends and family network and so he took on a financier amongst the Six to set up his rod mill in 1999. By the end of Balabag SSM he would operate thirty drums in his mill. Ibon earned a personal estimate of Php30-40,000 a month net after paying off his monthly dues to his financier in the Six. This number would occasionally rise up to six figures on a large gold strike.

In my interviews with the members of the Six, they spoke highly of their attempts to help finance all those that were capable to open up rod mills. They spoke of how they were happy to give out loans and to 'help' the community. What was never directly spoken of was how this benefitted them as the big financiers. Ibon spoke of not only the debt but of the frustration related to the inefficiency of the rod mill process which held the highest upfront costs and thus the greatest financial risks. The financiers benefited from this inefficiency as part of their loan agreement was the exclusive right to purchase a mill's gold and to process a rod mill's waste product:

...thirty drums cost almost one million pesos! It was only [in Balabag] that I experienced having a debt for one million. The financiers [the Six] don't have to worry about debt because they [just make loans and then they] buy our products, and [since at first we weren't allowed CIP plants] they were able to process our waste.

Without a Carbon-in-Pulp (CIP) plant of their own 75 percent of the valuable metals found in the ore became waste products which were provided to the Six to process themselves.

Near Ibon's home (in the lowlands at the base of Mt. Balabag) there lay large sturdy rusting metal cones eight or nine feet high. They stuck out like a sore thumb in the rural agricultural backdrop of the community, rusted husks acting as a reminder of former industry. At the time I didn't know what they were. In speaking with Ibon I learned that these were the heart of his CIP plant—an investment they were not able to make until late 2010 or early 2011, just over one and a half years before the closing down of SSM in Balabag. Ibon had had them shipped here from the mountain at great cost as he had hoped that his displacement was some kind of mistake, that the courts or the government or even the large scale mining company would hear the pleas of the small-scale miners and allow them back. Ibon's exuberant personality quieted when speaking of the CIP plant situation.

It wasn't until late 2010 or early 2011 that he was able to set up his own CIP plant (with loans from his financier in the Six) as up until 2009⁸⁸ MOSSMA restricted plant ownership to the top miners (the Magic Six). Ibon shares this account of how the issue of CIP plants galvanized a form of class-as-politics within the smaller owners:

You see it was like this sir, they didn't allow us to have plants before. [...] The organization [MOSSMA], they controlled it. They said it's not good to have so many plants, it should just be a few, because it's difficult to regulate if there were a lot. [...] Some discovered that it was a big money maker and they broke with MOSSMA and they set up plants anyway. Because those with rod mills they had to rely on those with plants, so we were not able to make that much. And we had such big debts! Some, they already were getting bigger, and they just set up plants. And we all started copying! How could they control it? So they gave in.

It was somewhere around 2009 that the first one went up, something like that. Then others just followed suit. Oh, in the beginning the financiers [the Six] got angry. But they couldn't control the people. Because some [outsiders] had businesses to buy gold, to sell chemicals, [these other financiers outside of the Six] said ok I'll give you a loan to set up. So people were able to do it.

Because just having a rod mill was tough. The capital costs were high. That's why I said, we really were relying on loans from [our financier in the Six]. Then later [after the plant] we were doing better, but it was too late, we had to leave [because of TVIRD].

That's how we found out [that plants were] why they [the Six] got rich. That's it. From the plant really. Because if it's just the ball mill, the expense was high. The ball mill, when your drum [wears down] you need to buy another. With the plant you just spend money once to set it up. Every year, it just keeps on going. That's where the money was. You don't make that much out of the ball mill.

[...] In Balabag [in the last two years] the financiers started giving loans [left and right] so more people could set up ball mills and plants. They [the smaller owners] thought they were going to get rich, but all the money they earned went back to the financiers. The people ended up with lots of debt [because Balabag SSM ended]... (interview July 2015).

⁸⁸ The year TVIRD finalized their purchase of the MPSA for Mt. Balabag from Zamboanga Minerals Corp (ZMC).

Years of successful mining had drastically increased the amount of available labour and the constant discovery of new gold veins on site had improved the capital holdings of small and medium capitalists. This provided the smaller capitalists leverage to force the Six to relaxing restrictions at first by bypassing them entirely to get financing elsewhere. The Six conceded and even became promoters of CIP plant ownership so as to ensure their roles as the top financiers, but this does demonstrate a successful grassroots action by smaller owners.

The Six, however, were also (perhaps accidental) beneficiaries of this change. In 2009 TVIRD secured the licenses necessary to develop the MPSA they had purchased from Zamboanga Minerals Corporation (ZMC), and TVIRD made it clear in their company memos to shareholders (as posted on their website www.tvird.com.ph) that they intended to take full control of Mt. Balabag and remove the “illegal” miners. According to MOSSMA documents 2010 also saw the beginning of accusations of “divide and conquer” techniques from TVIRD to break apart the SSM community. Thus the financing of expensive CIP plants to smaller owners meant strengthening ties to their financiers through the acquisition of greater loans, and more plants meant that more gold could be extracted in a shorter period of time—gold that would be sold to the Six. MOSSMA and the Six had been in embroiled in a legal battle with the multinational for years, and by 2009, the tide was swinging out of their favour. It was also at this time that the Six began to refocus the bulk of their investments outside of the community (this included large rice mills, hotels, retail and other service businesses, plans to run for political office in the 2013 elections, etc.).

If the difficulties felt by those smaller owners who came from a petit bourgeois background before SSM were already harsh, so much more for those few who through grit and determination were able to save and invest their earnings as a labourer in an attempt to rise above their class. This effort took many years, and in time some were able to achieve their goals—with the ‘help’ of loans from the Six. Yet as they tended to become mine owners late into the lifespan of SSM in Balabag they ended up putting the majority of their accumulated capital into this task. When plant ownership was promoted, they saw this as a great opportunity and dangerously went into deeper debt at a time when the TVIRD takeover was looming. As one Subanen individual who was only able to enter into rod mill ownership in 2009, and then two years later acquired further loans for a CIP plant, told me:

if only we had been given a real warning of TVIRD’s entry I wouldn’t have spent the money on the plant and equipment. I’d just have brought it to town and started a business there, I’d be ok now. There was notice given [by TVIRD about the imminent takeover] in 2011 to [my

financier in the Six], but he assured us it would be fine. We little people believed [him]... Don't worry, [he] said, but after he just left us. It's us that suffered. [He's] fine now though, he was rich already [before 2011]. Not like us (interview July 2014).

For the SSM capitalists this intra-class fragmentation was indirectly implied in our discussions, but the above was closest they came to blaming the Six for their difficulties. Their most common complaint was that MOSSMA waited too long to relax the monopoly on plants. They also expressed the above frustration in not being fully aware of the threat of TVIRDs entry as MOSSMA always projected confidence that they were positively advancing in their legal struggles and in negotiations with the LSM. The relaxing of plant ownership regulations was seen at the time as a success for smaller mine owners, yet in speaking with them in 2014 they spoke of how their decisions to enter into plant ownership resulted only in millions of pesos of debt. And within their post-Balabag state of affairs, they felt that they would be in debt for years, if not a lifetime. This brought remorse to many, as they felt that if not for that decision they may have left Balabag with money in their pockets.

At the end of the day, however they do not express direct blame on the Six and saw the failure of SSM as the result of mismanagement. They viewed the problem as based on an attitude of "first come first served," where immediate profit came at the expense of long term planning. They spoke to me of how if only SSM was more responsible with environmental compliance, and with ensuring that they complied with the legal frameworks, then Balabag would still be theirs. They saw this lack of regulation as driving a 'gold rush' mentality which put the environment and the people second eventually leading the government to close them down:

It's kind of the fault of small scale you see, [we miners] had become irresponsible, [our] tunnels—there were no regulations regarding distance. Also there... was no care for the tunnels. The tunnels went this way and that, there was no regulation. The people just talked and talked about the problems, but no one stepped up to fix them. You see this was how it was with SSM from my point of view, it was about money, money, money. The hunt for money. ... With small-scale everyone wanted to get rich and no one wanted to spend money [to improve the conditions] (June 2014).

OWNERS vs WORKERS

This most basic form of capitalist class conflict, between the labourers and the owners of the means of production, was an evolution from the relations between landowner and peasant. This conflict was not as consciously felt and expressed as the intra-class struggle above, as the labourers did feel that they were earning more than they had before and thus expressed general contentment about SSM. But beyond how people consciously assessed the situation, class conflict could be seen in the way the classes treated each other and how they performed perceived class roles. Ethnicity further divided the labourers into those of indigenous and non-indigenous descent, with those in the former category also having experienced discrimination based on the perception of their being less capable and less reliable. As noted by Philip Kelly, when “individuals from a particular ethnic group... find themselves disproportionately represented in deeply exploitative employment relationships, then a class process is being constituted through the construction of another form of difference” (Kelly 2012a:56).

Class conflict was also seen to have manifested itself with the importation of modified feudalistic elements from the agricultural, land-based relationships that dominate the regional economy. Some of these elements include the profit sharing found in sharecropping having been translated into extractive production, and in the system of patronage. The latter can be seen in the benefits of being employed directly by the Six. The Six were able to provide not only incentives like higher pay, but would also support long-time workers with support for health care, and the education of their children. In at least one example a long time operator who was ‘gifted’ a rod mill for his service after a decade, and he went on to become a moderately successful small owner himself. Members of the Six I interviewed proudly spoke of how they had helped put some of their employee’s children through school,

Off and on [I paid for] about 15 to go to school. Some would stop because they weren't interested, but I put them in school. [One kid, her] parents were workers of mine [so I helped] raise her, I put her through school! That one got to college and that's rare. She's like my kid, whatever she needs I'm here (interview July 2014).

This system of patronage⁸⁹ was both a boon for their employees, but also for their patrons in the Six as it helped shape their image as pillars of the community, and ensured them support within barangay and MOSSMA politics.

⁸⁹ This form of patronage is also seen in the semi-feudal agricultural system: “Occasionally, as part of their patronage, landlords paid for the schooling of tenants’ children who showed promise (Krinks 2002: 117).”

As noted earlier there were a wide variety of labourers in Balabag. Due to the limitations of whom I interviewed, I will focus mostly on the rod mill operators and the tunnel miners. I will discuss the role ethnicity played at the end of this section on class struggle.

1) Owners and Operators:

Operators were charged with the responsibility of implementing the rod mill refining process and were paid between PhP500 and PhP1000 a day based on experience and/or the size of the rod mill operation. The smaller the mill owner, the less they could pay operators and this meant that the best and



Figure 1.6: A rod mill in operation

most experienced operators tended to be employed by the Six. Operators generally worked alternating 24 hour shifts (one full day of work followed by one full day off) for two full weeks, followed by a two week layoff when another operator would take their place. In the working weeks they would live in Balabag, often living in a small dorm at the mill itself, followed by two weeks back in their home communities with their families. There were also “full-time” options, but most preferred this schedule. They tended to be men who had some high school education, as there was skill required and the owners saw a basic level of education as a demonstration of this. Some of the job hazards interviewees spoke of included: constant noise (which resulted in some speaking of a long term effect on their hearing), constant exposure to toxic chemicals (“no one used gloves or other safety equipment” said one interviewee), and the constant threat of accidents resulting from exhaustion and/or exposed machine parts.

These difficult working conditions meant that burn out was common (especially in the smaller mills that provided less pay and ‘benefits’), and few stayed for long continuous periods, which was a

source of frustration to mine owners. Small mill owners recounted with frustration how they were able to support poor farmers but implied that their help did not elicit loyalty:

They were content there. They were able to earn money every day! And when they had enough money they went back home to where they're from. And when they need money again? They came back (interview July 2014).

Occasionally operators would not return on schedule which necessitated the hiring of less qualified or experienced operators. This was a source of financial strain for smaller owners as new employees needed to be taught new skills. Inexperienced (or “careless” as they were sometimes called) operators were blamed for being wasteful with the application of mercury, either by adding too much, or at the wrong point in the process. At PhP7500 a kilogram, mercury was the biggest daily expense for mill owners. “Half a kilo a day would be wasted if the operator was not careful,” said one such small owner. Small owners linked these issues to the wealth extracted from them by their financiers, “that’s why we had such big loans from the financier... and they’re not afraid to loan it to you! In this way they get a cut from all of our equipment and products! The financiers didn’t care if there was waste.” Here again we see elements of the intra-class struggle between owners, first with the financier - financed relationship between large and smaller mine owners, and second with the large owners able to pay greater salaries to operators and through it able to employ the more skilled operators.

For the operator however, their concern was simply that they were able to earn enough for the wants and the needs of their families. The success of SSM in Balabag meant that there was always a demand for their labour. This was especially true during the final years of SSM when operations rapidly expanded with the relaxation of MOSSMA regulations, including the growth in mill ownership. Since mills were in regular need of experienced operators, there was little incentive for workplace loyalty for operators who worked for the second tier mill owners. It was not surprising that many often expressed their agency in the form of setting their own comings and goings. Thus despite how owners would speak emphatically of how they had helped poor individuals with little to no formal education.

2) Owners and Tunnel Miners:

Tunnel miners were more numerous than the operators due to the heavy manual labour nature of the work, and due to the many unregulated tunnels in Balabag. As discussed in an earlier section, although there were a limited number of productive tunnels, there were a countless number of tunnelling attempts. For the majority of MOSSMA’s operations each tunnel had an ‘owner’ which tended to be one

of local capitalists⁹⁰ due to the costs involved in all stages of mining. Alongside the relaxing of plant ownership, tunnel ownership also experienced growth beginning in 2009. These new tunnel owners tended to be the tunnel miners (herein referred to just as “miners”) who had amassed enough capital. Though technically these new tunnel owners were minor capitalists in their own right, I will be speaking of them in this section alongside other labourers in contrast with the mill owners, as the tunnel owners shared more traits in common with the labourers than with the mill owners. In this section I will refer to mill owners simply as “owners.” Tunnels built by miners will be referred to as “independent tunnels.” Here too we can see how classed performances need not correspond to class positions. Miners in independent tunnels had to have upfront funds to support themselves throughout the month. They often still had a financier in the sense of an individual to provide them loans to purchase materials and equipment, but these tended to be non-MOSSMA financiers. These independent financiers came from outside the community and provided loans at higher interest but without the usual ‘strings’ that tied production and purchasing into a strict one way relationship.

Miners were organized into work teams who worked the tunnels in shifts and split earnings amongst themselves. Financed miners were supported not only with the tools for mining but with everyday needs like a place to sleep (they had dorm houses for this purpose), as well as food, drink, and legal vices like cigarettes and alcohol. In exchange these tunnel miners were tied to that specific owner and the ore extracted had to be sent to their mill. The rod milling process determined the amount of gold (and other valuable minerals) that the two parties (owner and miner) split between themselves at the end of the month. Similar to the terms found in sharecropping, the profits were divided 40-60 (40 percent to the mining team, 60 to the owner)⁹¹. For financed miners, part of the agreement was that the minerals were sold to the owner and so they tended to be paid in cash. This income was divided by the owner equally to each member of the team. From these earnings a further cut would be made based on rent and the other everyday products used by each individual miner (a tab was kept on their purchases). Through this arrangement the owners were able to recoup some of the worker’s pay in a couple ways, via the price they offered for the minerals extracted (which differed from owner to owner), and via inflated prices for goods. For this reason, miners spoke of buying food from other community vendors in the early part of each pay cycle when they still had money in their pockets. And like operators, the Six tended to see more loyalty as they were able to provide better buying rates as the largest gold buyers in the community. These factors combined were part of the incentive toward the creation of independent tunnels in the latter years

⁹⁰ Though the Six did not monopolize tunnels, as the individuals with the most total capital they also had the most productive tunnels overall—and thus also financed the greatest number of tunnel miners.

⁹¹ Though similar to the sharecropping system in agricultural labour, the split was more favourable here. In general farmers are lucky with a 50:50 split, and more commonly the landowner gets 60-70%.

of SSM when tunnel miners had accumulated enough economic capital to support their daily needs without financing.

The miners' work was a high risk enterprise for more than the obvious safety risks associated with underground mining. Financially a miner was always in a precarious situation, when one worked a new tunnel there was no guarantee that a high yield ore vein would be discovered and one's earnings were dependent on what one was able to extract from those tunnels. And if one worked in a productive tunnel there remained the issue of the earnings being divided with the owner. While my interviewees expressed general contentment with their earnings, when pressed some did note that the 40-60 split seemed unfair as the heavy labour was done by the miners and not the owners. This was compounded by the knowledge that the rod mill process only extracted 25 percent of the ore, leaving 75 percent as waste product that was then extracted in full by CIP plant owners. Due to this theft was always an issue, which was the rationale behind MOSSMA's "Peace Guard" who protected ore stocks in both the tunnels and mills. Stories were shared by mine owners of miners "stealing" bags of raw ore from tunnels so as to sell it to competing mill owners who would buy them at a 'per bag' rate. Though the exact value within each bag was unknown before the refining process this was still seen as guaranteed income. Theft became an even bigger issue with the growth of CIP plant ownership. This development meant an increase in the valuable minerals able to be extracted, which increased the rate paid per bag. Said one small owner:

Do you know why [so many miners didn't earn as much as they could have?] A miner would not make a lot of money when Balabag was new and that's because there weren't yet many plants. It was like this sir, this was the situation before.... there was only a little gold in each sack that you refine [in a rod mill], only so how can they make money from that? But when there were a lot of plants, then they could earn more (interview July 2014).

The physical risk was also a major issue as tunnel collapse, or some other such work related hazard was a known and accepted issue. One former miner who later became a small owner spoke of the deaths in the community. By his unofficial personal tally, seventy-two accidental deaths occurred between 1995 to 2011. This issue had become of interest to him when a member of his own family died in a tunnel in the early years. He recounts with sadness that though he overall supported SSM, the deaths were a point of contention as owners never provided compensation for deaths or accidents as it was seen as the result of individual carelessness. Also many long time miners suffered health issues as the years wore on, but most never sought out a medical diagnosis as there was no formal health care system and so to stop working due to illness meant an end to one's income. It should be noted that members of the Six did speak of providing workers money for medicines when they became ill, but as not all of my respondents agreed

this to be the case, there at least appears to be an inconsistency with how this was provided and raises questions of patronage. In any case even for those provided with medicines, they would still have had to stop work and that would have had financial implications.

This relationship between the tunnel miner and the mining capitalist who owned the tunnels began to break down beginning in 2009 in much the same way as the elite capitalist monopoly over CIP plants. The threat of TVIRD's entry, matched with a general increase in economic capital ownership by more individuals, put pressure on the community to maximize earnings in as short a time as possible (which itself might have been part of the rationale for the relaxation of tunnel ownership). The latter issue put capitalists and workers at odds as more workers had enough capital to not have to rely on local financiers and thus were able to gamble on investments on private tunnels. While the capitalists saw an increase in tunnels as both harmful to the overall management of mining but also as an opportunity to maximize production.

WORKERS vs WORKERS

As with the capitalists, intra-class fragmentation existed amongst the workers as well. Other axes of difference came to affect class processes and performances. While it was consistently shared by interviewees that all who wanted work could access work during the MOSSMA era, I will discuss here two recurring narratives that show that behind this lay a new form of competition brought forth by the introduction of SSM. The first was the inter-ethnic tension that divided Subanen and non-Subanen workers and privileged non-indigenous workers. The second came late in SSM development with the breakdown of the relationship between labourer and mine owner. The tension between Subanen and non-Subanen will be discussed in detail in the following section, so here I will focus on the example of intra-proletarian struggle during the latter stages of the MOSSMA era.

The worst of the problems occurred in the latter years beginning in 2009. The reoccurrence this year and the year following should be seen in light of 2009 being when TVIRD finalized its purchase requirements for the Balabag MPSA land claim. There had been a growth of independent tunnel creation as miners had accumulated enough savings to afford their daily needs without a local financier. With this the connection between tunnel and mill ownership was no longer absolute. This gave more power to the miners as they could now choose where to sell their ore. The opening up of CIP plant ownership created further cracks in the social system as it allowed for backdoor sales of ore bypassing their financier (considered 'theft' by the financiers). In this climate the miners began competing for access to the most

lucrative tunnels and thus maximizing personal earnings within their work team. Three major effects of the dissolution of the miner-financier/mill owner relationship included (1) the growth in direct violence (including murder), (2) the further relaxing of safety measures, (3) and the independence of work teams, which meant that the division of income was left to the work teams themselves.

The issue of peace and order is one that has been documented in other “gold rush” type SSM though-out the country:

And because of their unsystematic mining methods and cultural differences, maintaining peace and order [is an issue] in a gold-rush community. For instance... since the discovery of [gold on Mt.] Diwalwal, violence of various forms such as murders, threats, etc., have erupted. An estimated number of 4000 miners have been killed in the area for the past twenty years (Rey and Saturay 2005:12).

Similar issues were reported in Balabag, as one Subanen resident noted:

In 2009 they started killing each other. There was the grabbing of tunnels. They said they didn't want others to take what's theirs.

Some of them said they should count how many of them there were and just make sure all got a fair share, they shouldn't fight. Others said, ‘no I don't want to share, what's mine is mine.’ When they earned a lot sometimes [they debated on how to share the earnings] so some ended up killing each other. That way whoever was left, then it's his. It was like that. So there was a lot who died. Some were just hit on the head.

[Sometimes people died out of superstition.] They said [the deaths] would help make their tunnels 'high grade.' So many died. [...] one woman, she was part of our tribe, a Subanen, they pushed her into a tunnel—because they said they weren't extracting anything more out of the tunnel, it was no longer high grade, so maybe if they deposited a person it would become high grade again. Yeah, that's how it was! And yes, they did end up extracting a lot of gold after. A lot. It was like that.

...why did they do that? She was just selling vegetables!

There were accidents too because there were so many tunnels. They put a tunnel under gardens and homes, sometimes, if there was rain, or a earthquake, the tunnel would collapse. Lots died (interview July 2014).

Connected to this rush to maximize extractive profits came the boom in tunnels, which being less connected to mill owners and financiers, were created haphazardly. This had an effect on not only miners, but also on community safety. As the quote above mentions, tunnellers would sometimes dig under homes, or even near the school (as reported in a 2012 video by the Mindanao Examiner). The breakdown of the social dynamics in this period relaxed the ties that bound owner and labourer, but it created a kind of capitalistic anarchy which pitted workers against each other and also increased ethnic tension with the indigenous community whom still experienced discrimination.

THE ROLE OF ETHNICITY: SUBANEN & NON-SUBANEN

MOSSMA documents claim that “about seventy percent (70%) of the people [who were] employed and benefited [from] the area were the “Subanen”, the Indigenous People coming from the barangays of the provinces of Zamboanga Del Sur, parts of Zamboanga Sibugay, and Zamboanga Del Norte who were marginalized, living in the communities along the periphery of the mine area” (MOSSMA 2011, MOSSMA 2013⁹²). Despite their large numbers, the indigenous peoples tended to work the lowest level labour jobs: cargo, rock crushing, and tunnel mining. This frustration was evident in many of my interviews with the Subanen who cited racism by the settlers who saw them as culturally inferior. At first they claimed difficulty in acquiring even these menial jobs, but this eventually gave way due to the high demand for labour. As one interviewee noted:

At best [we] Subanen were just there to do the heavy labour, that’s it. But when the times came that we needed help, the answer would be no. The Visayans were afraid of us Subanen, they thought we would poison them with magic. Eventually, after a lot of time, we got closer as they got to know us, and really we got close because we would follow their orders, they knew we indigenous people were dependent on them. I’m mad, that’s true, but I can’t do anything about it (interview July 2014).

⁹² These were never published in any official media outlets but were distributed as pamphlets and/or delivered as powerpoint presentations. Their intended audience were the government and local, national, and international NGOs and activist groups. I obtained them directly from MOSSMA officials.

Ethnicity can be seen here as an axis of difference that impacted upon the multiple dimensions of class. Despite inhabiting multiple class positions (with a small number even becoming mine owners), 'Subanen-ness' acted as a form of embodied cultural capital that impacted on how the Subanen were perceived and how they perceived themselves. Their classed performances (and the classed performances of others) were always through this lens. And in general their 'Subanen-ness' was seen as a negative. The non-Subanen settlers exhibited a paternalistic view of the Subanen, which in practice sometimes manifested as a 'sympathy' to their poverty and status in society. While at first fearful, their eventual integration in Balabag was almost seen as an act of charity where they were able to improve the lives and culture of the indigenous:

In their home areas the Subanens really did suffer. I mean they didn't really have livelihoods there. What did they do? They'd just plant a little. But when there was Balabag, their lives improved. Plus there they were educated. They became aware ['na mumulat sila'], they were no longer ignorant ['di na sila parang walang alam']. Their life standards went up because money was easy, they were able to eat what they were not able to before, because they could now buy meat and the delicious foods. They were able to buy clothes. So look, they were able to improve their lives! (Interview with a small mill owner, July 2014)



Figure 1.7: Canatuan Subanons performing a ritual before a community gathering (Alex Felipe 2010).

In contrast to the settler discrimination towards the Subanen was the view of long-time Subanen residents of Balabag that control of their land had been taken from them by outsiders. The land and their connection to it was part of their cultural capital. Whether they actively took part in mining or not, the original residents specifically and the Subanen in general felt that they (1) had no power over their own lands, (2) were not benefitting to the extent they should be from its exploitation, and that (3) were thus forced into a “take it or leave it” attitude towards mining. The Subanen relationship with MOSSMA had long been fraught with difficulty, from the complaints of the original Subanen prospectors (as discussed in chapter four), to the incursion of miners into the Subanen community on Mt. Balabag, to their early difficulty in finding employment and their continuous experiences with discrimination.

Indigenous issues were also applied by MOSSMA as part of its political strategy to legitimize its presence as legal small-scale miners. Five years after SSM began, and under the shadow cast by LSM exploration, MOSSMA approached the Subanen to formalize a *Free and Prior Consent* (FPIC) agreement. This agreement, which included a profit sharing clause, was signed in a private meeting between MOSSMA leadership and two Subanen leaders on 13 December 1999. In my summer 2014 interviews, MOSSMA representatives spoke of this as an example of their respect for the Subanen rights to the land. My Subanen interviewees were more conflicted. While they tended to support SSM as it (eventually) provided regular employment to them as individuals, they also recognized that as a community they had been disenfranchised from their land, and except for a few of the top Subanen leaders and their families there were no benefits. They claim that as far as they know the promise of profit sharing was never honoured beyond a one time payout of Php540,000 on 4 May 2010 (over ten years after the signing of the FPIC), which was provided in a private meeting to two timuays⁹³. One former MOSSMA advisor supported this claim:

The royalties were not religiously fulfilled by MOSSMA. During my time it was just that one time lump sum—which was backpay—and three motorcycles presented to Subanen leadership. My suggestion was to put this money into the process to secure their ancestral domain claim [the CADT] and to present the royalty payment in front of the community, to have a ceremony—it shouldn’t have been presented to only two of their leaders in a closed room. I don’t know how they distributed the money, I don’t know... Of everything that happened, I feel the worst for the Subanen... they sold their birthright... (interview July 2014).

⁹³ Copies of the FPIC agreement and one time cash transfer were provided to me.

Tania Li in “Land’s End” discusses the frustration of one indigenous tribe in Indonesia to “join the march of progress promised in modernization narratives, only to encounter the polarizing effect of the capitalist relations that soon emerged among them” (Li 2014:2). In Balabag the advent of SSM was just the latest incursion of a modernization narrative. The experience of the Subanen with SSM replicated a process that predated the entry of mining to their community—one that has been tied to outside pressures that they could only react to. As touched on earlier, the Subanen peoples of Zamboanga peninsula had a long history of displacement from their lands stretching beyond the period of Spanish colonization in the region (Imbing 2002; Lopez-Bernal 2010). Their long history of disenfranchisement, not only allowed the state to stake control over ownership of the land, but also weakened social and cultural capital within their tribe. When this met with the entry of SSM, the softened community ties created a situation where the “polarizing effects of capitalist relations” resulted in a scramble to find socioeconomic security on a family, rather than community, scale.

Among the Subanen, the top tribal leaders were able to trade the social capital of their leadership for advantages in the world of the settlers. The top timuays of the area were given the most blame by the Balabag Subanens for their hardships. When the community was displaced from the lowlands in the 1970s they dispersed to different areas, including to Mt. Balabag, as noted in chapter four. However, the leadership structure remained and even though most of the top timuays didn’t reside in Balabag it was they that dealt with the mining companies (first MOSSMA, later TVIRD). It was they that received the MOSSMA pay outs, and it was they that the community blamed for later “selling Balabag to TVIRD for millions of pesos in exchange” (interview with a Balabag Subanen leader, June 2014). This resulted not only in community, but family rifts. As one Balabag Subanen shared:

[The top timuays] were part of the demolishing [of Balabag SSM], because of money, because they were tranfixed by money so they said ‘why not join TVI?’ We’re related to them and they still did it.

I cried I said, why did you did this, aren't you family, why did you do this?

He said there was no more family! ‘Look at me,’ he said ‘I was able to bring up the quality of my life and my family’s lives. What’s important is that I have money now, I can eat well.’ That’s what he said (interview with a Balabag Subanen, June 2014).

HOW SSM PRODUCED A LACK OF INCENTIVE & “THE GOOD LIFE”

SSM capitalism was able to improve the earnings and to some extent the class positions of those involved relative to the semi-feudal agricultural production they originated from, but the shadow of that past also helped create a lack of incentive to re-invest profits in new technologies and in industrial expansion. In Marx’s vision of capitalism profitable ventures come part and parcel with a competitive structure that didn’t quite fully blossom in Balabag due to the constraints imposed by basing the extractive operation on the semi-feudal system. While class struggle was creating changes near the end of the MOSSMA era, for the majority of its lifespan a core elite reined in the competitive compulsion found in Marxian capitalism. An economy based on the dependency of smaller owners and labourers on the elite limited productive investment. Further without state support of the operations (which were always considered “illegal”) industrial linkages were limited, as were the creation of downstream industries.

The local elite (the “Magic Six”) had seen the most upwards mobility in class position and in all forms of capital, and in their rise to local power they modelled SSM after the semi-feudal system. This economic system of the Philippine countryside was not easily abandoned by SSM capitalists. It produced a form of control over mining akin to large landowner control of land—and for a time they were successful in limiting the expansion of mining technology investments by smaller owners so as to maintain their own power. As Philip Kelly wrote about agriculture, the same could be said of the extractive industries:

it has been elite control of agricultural export commodities, combined with the political power wielded by the land-owning class, that has defined the Philippine political economy and has provided a strong basis for an outward-oriented, export-based economy (1997: 155).

In the previous pages it has been discussed that within SSM there was a struggle born of the creation of new capitalist and class relations. This however did not result in any coherent class consciousness based on Marxian class positions, perhaps due to the vertical ties of reciprocity in the patron–client relationships—and definitely influenced by classed performances that divided class groupings beyond shared economic interests. Focusing on the labourers, despite their struggles to maximize earnings, they were conscious of their significantly better financial position relative to the general agricultural population. For a small number of the labourers class positions rose within SSM, but the majority expressed a general contentment. Class performance, in the sense that higher earnings allowed individuals to consume and embody “higher class” life (as they perceived it), was the more common marker of success. The increase in earnings which saw barriers in productive reinvestment that

could raise class positions, often found an outlet in luxury items and social vices. It gave the newly economically secure miners a chance for what they saw as “the good life.”

THE LIFE OF A LABOURER

It's better to have work where the money is easy rather than [any other] livelihood. Because if you're just an employee your status won't rise right away. Compare that to mining, with just *a little effort*, and *business sense*, and *luck*. If you are able to... hit a jackpot, that's instant status, instant riches (from an interview with a member of the “Magic Six”, italics mine, July 2014).

Balabag small-scale mining was predominantly male, provided ‘easy money,’ had limited opportunities for investment for the majority of its lifespan, and existed in a region with limited opportunities for socioeconomic mobility. This combination helped shape the production of social space. SSM provided much higher than average earnings and came with the real possibility of “hitting a jackpot” with discoveries of large deposits. This made mining an attractive option relative to the agricultural work that dominated the region or to the few urban jobs⁹⁴. The relatively lucrative SSM work did not require an education and this proved to be an incentive for many young interview subjects to drop out of school despite their parents (who worked in SSM) providing funding and encouragement. The dearth in opportunities in the region resulted in mining being the focus of their economic activities, thus when individuals made long term investments in a hope to secure their family’s future the focus was on SSM. However there was little incentive towards large investments beyond expensive rod mills as for most of the Balabag era MOSSMA regulations made investment into the most profitable technologies difficult. Most miners thus became focused on the performance of class mobility. They became caught up in classed consumption by purchasing symbols of modern wealth (e.g. electronics, vehicles, modern appliances, etc.). One example of class-as-embodiment was seen in how ‘gold rush’ masculinist culture promoted social vices.

A range of incomes were made by the labourers of Balabag. At the low end were the cargo carriers and rock crushers. The cargo carriers brought in goods to the community from the barangays below. This was for the most part very heavy labour as there were no roads for the majority of MOSSMA’s lifespan so

⁹⁴ Dominated by construction or service industry work, with a small amount of factory or warehouse work available, though mostly in Zamboanga City or in the large rice mills scattered across the peninsula.

everything from foodstuffs to the petrol and chemicals for use in refining was physically carried to the community. It was here that many high school aged ‘child labourers’ were employed— this was not forced labour, the youth either chose work over school, or did the work as a “part-time” job outside school hours. An average load of between 50 to 100 lbs earned PhP250-500 per trip (the uphill hike would take approximately three hours). These labourers tended to do about three to six journeys a week, and as this only took up a portion of the day, many would also participate in “rock crushing,” which entailed using sledge hammers to manually crush ore collected from the tunnels into manageable pieces and putting them into sacks for hauling to the mills—this would earn them approximately another PhP250. Thus on average cargo labourers tended to average a minimum of PhP5000 of income a month, which compared to the average of PhP2800 for agricultural workers, was still a relatively good income for the region.

On the highest end of the earnings spectrum were the tunnel miners who did the physical work of underground mining for the raw ore. In general these individuals claimed regular monthly incomes of approximately PhP10,000 at the minimum in my interviews. Here I will use the stories of the “Cana” family (father and son) to provide an example of the common socioeconomic outcomes of these workers. “Emilio Cana” was a forty-five year old father of three with a grade four education. He started working as a small scale miner in 1986 when he was sixteen years old starting at a low yield mine before moving to Canatuan (then the future site of TVIRD’s first Philippine mine) which like Balabag was very lucrative for the small-scale miners. When this site was claimed by TVIRD he relocated to Balabag. He estimated his mine earnings at a minimum of PhP9000 a month (he provided the lowest monthly estimate of all my tunnel miner interviewees). Coming from a landless peasant family, the mining income was considered very lucrative.

The question of what became of these earnings from all those years mining weighed on me. His twenty-three year old son “Julio” (interview July 2014) provided a candid response, one I was given time and time again when following up on this question. He told me, “I wasn’t able to save, I thought this life was going to be forever—but it wasn’t. When TVI came the good times were over.” His father had spoken to me quite extensively about how he wanted his children to go to college, how he always ensured that he had saved enough each year for the costs of their schooling—a common story amongst the miners. But like his elder brother before him, Julio left high school in order to work in the mines. He said, “I dropped out... because the earnings in SSM were high and no one tells you what to do, there’s no boss, if you want to work, there’s work.” In my interviews with other labourers who were school-aged during the MOSSMA years, I asked them what employment ambitions they had when they were younger. Interestingly most did not have a clear job path in mind. The most common answers were just that they wanted a job that paid enough that they could afford life’s needs:

As long as I have enough to pay for my families needs that's enough... to pay for good food, a nice home, education for my kids, gadgets... that's what I want (interview July 2014).

Despite the hopes that higher incomes could help children reach higher levels of education, many respondents shared a sadness that despite their encouragement many of the children (especially the males) chose to drop out and work in SSM instead. Higher education did not confer any great advantage in Balabag. While a high school level education did make work as an operator easier to obtain, hard working tunnel miners could earn just as much as an operator in an average month, and far exceeded them in 'lucky' months. SSM was more lucrative than most forms of employment that students could hope to attain, so former students like Julio did not see the value in continuing.

For the Canas, as with the majority of the miners, life was lived without much thought given to life after SSM. When compared to the region's other economic opportunities, Balabag was clearly providing far and away the greatest socioeconomic returns for individuals with limited social, cultural, and economic capital. Emilio Cana was one of those tunnel miners turned independent tunnel owner in 2010. It was only in SSM where he saw a future for his family. But the boon of SSM produced a kind of local space, not only as a social formation but also as a mental construction, based on the reaction to the social and material realities of limited regional opportunities. Without the opportunity to improve socioeconomic mobility, the local culture was shaped around ideas of 'the good life' and this manifested in outward displays of wealth and 'manliness.'

As Julio recounted, the opportunities to "live for today" were seductive. "Life there was like being abroad! Money was no object." As such it was common for the miners to see their money, which they often called "jackpots," easily spent on "the good life. [...] Drinking with the boys was part of a normal night. It was normal to spend PhP1000 a night for drinks alone. ...I had a friend there that had a lucky strike and spent PhP150,000 in just two months entertaining his friends!" As one mine owner put it, "drinking, gambling—the money from gold was easy to spend. It's easy. Because [the workers] thought: later I'll just make more money. So they spend it easily! But for those who really were using their brains, they were able to buy things... but most often they would just buy a motorcycle."

Balabag, like many mining communities around the world (Scott, 2007), had a population that was predominantly male. "There were a lot of vices, even the kids had vices! It was normal to see kids smoking by age eleven. This life is normal for men (interview July 2014)." The influx of economic capital combined with the reinforced patriarchal culture resulting in a boom for the local tavern owners

who began to bring in so-called ‘dancing girls’ (as Julio called them) who made up the underground sex industry. As Julio shared,

It was mostly men in Balabag, it was a community of workers, most of the women (wives, sisters) lived in the towns below. It was like a prison up there... The women were expensive, even the older ladies that weren’t much to look at cost PhP2000 for three hours. The videoke bar owners brought in the women from out of town... they were officially the workers at the bar — but they’d be made available if you made ‘special plans.’

Julio adds another element to the story of sex work in Balabag, that “sometimes [the women] leave when people got tired of their faces.”

It was interesting for me that the most candid interview subjects on the issue of social vices and prostitution were two young people in their early twenties, this young man, and Leia (an original Subanen resident of Balabag pre-SSM). The majority of my interview subjects (who tended to be in their late twenties to early fifties—with the majority being in their thirties) would admit that social vices existed in passing, but were not comfortable exploring the topic. In general when discussing social ills the subjects and/or victims were always someone else, never themselves or their families. And it should also be noted that Julio and Leia both expressed discourses from gendered lenses. For Juilo, vices and womanizing were normalized expressions of ‘manliness’ (“*ang lalaki may bisio* [men have vices]”). The linking of vice and ‘manly’ behaviour was also a common comment from my other respondents in the brief moments they would touch on the subject. For Leia, such discussions were tinged with sadness and despite her candour it seemed that she was still holding back. I told her about the stories I had heard about the drinking, drugs, gambling, and ‘dancing girls’, and mentioned that most others were uncomfortable speaking to me about it and I asked her if any of it was true.

[Drug abuse] happened. That's the truth... True. ...when there was a lot of small-scale there was when it was the worst. Even women! ...they would hide it in their bra and offer it to people... PhP500 only. My cousin was one of them.

They called them ‘bamboo girls’ ...you saw them dancing without a bra, without underwear. Naked! That's what they want, to earn money. Bar owners liked it because it increased their income, so... then more would come. And they were pretty! Pretty, and light skinned-- but that's at night only, during the day [she laughed] you’d look at them and say ‘*uy!*’ [She laughed again.] Some, [her laughing stopped] some already were sick. My cousin, we

thought she was dead, because she—she—that illness of women, she caught it—I don't know what its called (interview June 2014).

Leia wouldn't elaborate further on what became of her cousin, or how she had become involved in the sex trade. This situation can be viewed as another manifestation of the lack of opportunities in the region. Previous to arriving in Balabag her cousin had been living in one of the regional cities, after she became ill she left. Though I would get no further accounts as to what became of the 'bamboo girls' I believe that it would be safe to assume that her illness (being an 'illness of women') was not an isolated case. It was common for many young Subanen women who leave their homes and ancestral lands to find work in the urban centres to support their families back home. Leia herself had left for three years and had gone as far as the Visayan islands to find work with a Tagalog speaking family as a domestic helper. She wouldn't give many details of this, and when I asked her relative about it, he hinted that it was a very traumatic experience for her and that was why she returned. Another cousin of hers had also left for Manila to find work; this was in 2006 when she was eighteen and they haven't heard from her since. In my interviews with Subanens this theme of leaving home to seek work was not limited to women, nor was involvement in illicit illegal activities, but there was a clear gendered path⁹⁵. For the women the legal work tended to be domestic labour, which on average paid less than PhP4000 a month (that's the average salary in Manila), while the sex trade loomed for those either unsuccessful securing work, or for those lured by money, or coerced through other means. For the Subanen men urban work often meant construction work as this required no formal education, but was precarious labour (in terms of both job security and job safety) and often paid just as much as agricultural work (PhP150/day) but came with the additional burden of the increased expenses that come with living in urban centres. Some shared that the stress of finding adequate pay led them to find employment with illegal organizations, primarily the drug syndicates ("sindicato") which were common across the region.

THE END OF SSM IN BALABAG

The era of small-scale mining in Balabag ended in the autumn of 2012 with the demolition of their community by government agencies supporting the TVIRD claim. MOSSMA and the people of Balabag had been aware of the threat of a takeover by large-scale mining since its earliest days. LSMs had been exploring in the area since the 1990s and TVIRD, which eventually bought out the ZMC MPSA in 2009, established an exploration camp in the Balabag community alongside the SSM operation in 2006. The

⁹⁵ Also see "Norito's" story in chapter four.

small-scale miners were also aware of what became of SSM on Mt. Canatuan at TVIRD's first site in the Philippines in the province just north of them, as seen in these quotes from a 2012 MOSSMA powerpoint⁹⁶:

...the tranquility of the Mt. Balabag area ... small scale gold miners ... had been abruptly disrupted upon the entry of TVI ... who are notorious for its conquest of the hapless indigenous people and small scale miners in economically productive but blood-drenched Canatuan, Siocon...

[...]

Effect One: The Subanen people and their Council of Elders were polarized and divided. Their sacred land exploited.

Effect Two: The small-scale miners who were originally occupying and mining the area were ejected, evicted, and buried in the dustbin of history.

But where have all our minerals gone?? Gone to a foreign land!!!

The conflict began to escalate in 2010 as MOSSMA began to reach out to human rights and social justice organizations with accusations of “scheming aggression” and “divide and rule” tactics which resulted in human rights breaches which they accredited to TVIRDs interests in claiming the land (MOSSMA powerpoint 2012). That year TVIRD reached out to Balabag mine owners with offers of pay-outs for their homes, businesses, and land—which according to many of my interviewees were eventually accepted by “many⁹⁷” of the local owners as the reality of the takeover became more likely (interviews June-July 2014). These payments were seen as “inadequate” but those who accepted saw it as an option of leaving with something compared to losing everything. At the same time MOSSMA claims that TVIRD deployed armed security forces which they blame for intimidation tactics including blockades for their mining equipment and goods, and the burning of homes, mining equipment, and facilities. MOSSMA replied by pressing charges and filing legal cases, as well as reaching out to media, activists, NGOs, and

⁹⁶ Document provided by a former MOSSMA official.

⁹⁷ Though it is interesting to note that as of August 2012 Butch del Castillo reported for the Business Mirror that “Less than half of the scores of small-time miners accepted, but the rest steadfastly refused” (16 August 2012). So it is unclear if “many” truly accepted or if this was just how it was perceived by the community.

multiple scales of government (up to pleas to the President for assistance and intervention) (MOSSMA 2012⁹⁸).

On 22 December 2011 the Zamboanga Del Sur “Inter-Agency Task Group on Mining, Environment, and Public Order and Safety” unanimously passed a resolution⁹⁹ urging for the issuance of a “stoppage order against all persons conducting mining operations or activities within the territorial jurisdiction of Zamboanga del Sur without permit or contract duly issued by the government.” This resolution sparked the most heated period of conflict between MOSSMA and TVIRD. The first quarter of 2012 saw an increase in accusations of human rights violations. These included claims of NPA rebel activity which resulted in violent encounters (including the burning of TVIRD vehicles—though in my interviews I spoke with witnesses claiming that the burning of the vehicles was conducted by TVIRD forces themselves in order to accuse the NPA). Organized protests against the LSM takeover organized by MOSSMA and supported by activists and NGOs intensified during this period, which was matched by an increase in the presence of armed TVIRD security forces who were accused of firing of weapons at or in the direction of Balabag residents, including at a protest rally. The security forces were also blamed for the extrajudicial killings of small scale miners themselves. In late February 2012 MOSSMA released what they claimed to be official emails between Yulo Perez, the Chief Operating Officer and Vice President of Operations at TVIRD and AFP forces regarding an armed night raid on MOSSMA to confiscate and or destroy their equipment¹⁰⁰.

On Friday 13 April 2012 the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) issued an official Cease and Desist Order¹⁰¹ (CDO) to MOSSMA blaming their “illegal mining activities” for “deplet[ing] government mineral resources” and causing “unnecessary violence in affected areas resulting [in the] loss of people’s lives.” The rationales for this order revolved around the “illegal” nature of the operations which lacked a People’s Small-Scale Mining Contract, and Mineral Processing Permits for their Carbon-in-Pulp (CIP)

⁹⁸ Document provided by a former MOSSMA official.

⁹⁹ This resolution was signed by: Provincial Governor Antonio Cerilles, Regional Executive Director Arleigh Adorable Cesó IV (Dept Energy & Natural Resources), Albert Johann Jacildo (Mines and Geosciences Bureau), Allan De Gala (Environmental Management Bureau-IX), Dr. Adelaida Borja (Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer-IX), Jose Bayani Gucela (Philippine National Police), Col. Gerardo Barrientos (Armed Forces of the Philippines, 1st Infantry Tabak Division), Hon. Ernesto Mondarte (Board Member-Committee Chair on Peace and Order), and Rito Ordiz (Local Environment and Natural Resources Officer-ZDS)

¹⁰⁰ TVIRD disputes the authenticity of these emails. The raid did not materialize, though whether that was due to the falsity of the claim or the public release of the operation is not known.

¹⁰¹ Signed by OIC Regional Director Albert Johann B. Jacildo in Zamboanga City.

plants. This was followed by a provincial resolution from the office of Governor Cerilles (PPOC Resolution No. 05),

urgently [requesting] the National Government, through His Excellency Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III, to take the lead... by ordering the PNP [Philippine National Police] and AFP [Armed Forces of the Philippines] to assist the MGB in the enforcement of the CEASE AND DESIST ORDER (CDO)... in coordination with the LGU [local government unit] of Zamboanga del Sur, LGU of Bayog, and the LGU of Tigbao (from a copy of the undated document acquired through the MGB on July 2014, caps theirs).

Before the implementation of the CDO, on 12 October 2012, members of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) raided several mine processing facilities belonging to the “Magic Six” in Balabag. Reported by the Mindanao Examiner (Jacinto 2013) as “about peace keeping and crime prevention because of growing lawlessness and criminality in the area” members of the Six were charged before the Provincial Prosecutor’s Office for alleged violation of Republic Act 8294 (for the illegal possession of firearms, ammunition, explosives), as well as Republic Act 6969 (for the possession of toxic substances):

Raiding personnel of the CIDG recovered thirteen high powered firearms including an M-16 rifle and KG9 submachine gun, 4,000 metres of detonating cord, four sacks of commercial dynamite, and assorted ammunition, tons of cyanide... and gallons of nitric acid.

And two weeks later on 24 October 2012, the CDO was implemented by a task force (created by Zamboanga del Sur Governor Antonio Cerilles) composed of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB), the Philippine National Police (PNP), the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), the 53rd Infantry Battalion of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), and a disabling team to dismantle the homes and SSM structures of miners.

My field interviews included many stories surrounding this event, most spoke of how it came as a surprise. There were stories of being awoken in the morning by the task force (with a heavy emphasis in their stories on the heavily armed soldiers, police, and security forces) and having had to vacate their homes just moments before they were destroyed. On the TVIRD website (Deliverio 2012) in an article titled “Illegal gold glitters no more in Balabag” they reported that:

At the break of dawn, a hundred Philippine National Police (PNP) officers proceeded to the place on board transport vehicles.

[...]

Trucks loaded with uniformed military and police began to arrive by the dozens. They were all carrying guns. Others who were not wearing uniforms had guns too, but clearly seen at the backs of their bullet-proof vests were the big three letters: NBI (National Bureau of Investigation).

[...]

But on this day, the destruction wrought by illegal mining in Balabag hill had finally come to a stop. The glitter of illegal gold that blinded lawless elements from sensibility has now faded away. Sadly, it was the same glitter that tempted some people in the government who allowed the illegal trade to thrive and flourish for three decades in the first place.

THE SEEDS FOR POST-SSM LIFE

This chapter described the rise and fall of small-scale mining on Mt. Balabag. With the transition from semi-feudal agricultural production to extractive production came changes to class formations, class dynamics, and capital flows. Class positions did shift to varying degrees for some of those involved in mining. The greatest mobility was realized by the so-called “Magic Six,” the Balabag mining elite who translated pre-mining class position and accumulated capital, combined with the temporal contingency of being the first large investors on-site, into economic and political power on the site. These six were also able to convert their gains into investments outside of SSM and the Balabag area so that when the TVIRD takeover occurred their gains were not lost. Balabag SSM also resulted in a level of socioeconomic advancement for many of the second tier owners and even the labourers—especially after the disincentive towards productive investment was overturned by class struggle. However unlike with the elite their investments (along with their earnings) were tied to SSM in Balabag. This would lead to a difficult post-mining life, one in which the frustration of having lost what was gained met with the realities of a return to a mining-free life.

Chapter Six:
LIFE AFTER SMALL-SCALE MINING

The majority of my fieldwork was conducted in the barangays of Diplahan and Bayog. In this chapter elements of participant observation into community life will be incorporated to complement data gathered from semi-structured interviews to describe the changes in circumstances for the former miners. In the previous chapter on the development of Balabag SSM the focus was put on the economic dimensions of socioeconomic mobility (with a stress on class dynamics). In this chapter I will complement those elements with an inquiry into class mobility as seen through the vernacular sense of general well-being. I will examine how changes in class dynamics before, during, and *especially* after Balabag impacted life chances (i.e. educational attainment, chances in acquiring stable above-subsistence livelihoods, etc.) and quality of life (i.e. cultural and health impacts).

When the demolition of SSM operations in Balabag began in late October 2012, the residents were forced to leave the community and for the most part returned back to the communities from which they came. Many of my interview subjects spoke of having to walk with what they could carry back down the mountain to their home barangays and sitios in the municipalities of Diplahan and Bayog where their families lived, a three to four hour walk. Those who accepted the payout offers of TVIRD spoke of being given one way transportation on the back of pick up trucks, and promises that their belongings would be delivered to them—though some reported that either that their goods never arrived, were incomplete, or were broken. A MOSSMA leader shared this reflection on what became of the former Balabag residents:

They went back to where they were from because they didn't know anything else... some went to places where there were other mines, but mostly they went back to their homes because firstly, how will they eat if they don't have a livelihood? So they just went home and went back to agriculture work (interview July 2014).

There was one notable exception to this story, and these were the original indigenous inhabitants of Balabag. One of these original families, the top timuay's family, had parlayed the social and cultural capital of their leadership positions into economic capital and political power during both the tenure of SSM and then even more lucratively in their dealings with TVIRD—but for the majority of the original Subanen of Balabag, the end of SSM meant not only the loss of their livelihoods, but yet another case of loss and displacement from their lands. For the majority their 'Subanen-ness' resulted in difficulties within SSM and harsher post-SSM outcomes.

My fieldwork began approximately twenty months after the demolition of MOSSMA's small scale mining operations on Mt. Balabag. In my interviews it was post-SSM life that people first wanted to discuss. They wanted to share their hardships and talked with longing and nostalgia for SSM life in Balabag. The common message was that life was improving for all during SSM, and that for the first time they had opportunities. For them the improvement and opportunities were directly related to improvements in income and opportunities to purchase commodities that they had previously been unable to. These commodities ranging from everything from daily needs, to consumer goods, to education for their children, and personal spending for enjoyment. After an initial set of interviews conducted with my local partner AdPeace outside the communities where the former miners had returned, I was able to secure local key informants and guides that were able to help me access the rural communities of Diplahan and Bayog. I wanted to discover how almost two decades of increased opportunity and of significantly higher earnings impacted the local people. Despite the loss of SSM, did the increased revenue gained from mining reflect upward mobility¹⁰² relative to their pre-mining lives? Were they able to make long term decisions to translate their economic capital into social and cultural capital that would benefit the future opportunities of their family?

In this chapter I will discuss the lives of the people post-SSM, I will begin with a general discussion of the field site and of my two main local gatekeepers timuay Itim and Cory¹⁰³. While both were ethnically Subanen, Cory was raised in the lowlands within settler culture, and while he acknowledges his ethnicity he was aware that in many ways his cultural milieu was closer to that of the settler. Cory also had closer connections to MOSSMA (due to the work he did with them as an employee¹⁰⁴) and thus was helpful in helping me access a wider variety of former Balabag owners, labourers, and residents. In contrast timuay Itim had closer connections to social justice activists and with the Subanen. From here I will discuss the post SSM lives of the labourers as they represent the majority, before turning to the top earners (the elite and smaller capitalists).

I will argue that despite the stated goals of MOSSMA to create development 'by Filipinos, for Filipinos', upward mobility beyond SSM faced difficult challenges due to an overall lack of regional development. Without government support in developing the physical and industrial infrastructure, and

¹⁰² "Mobility" not only in terms of the four dimensions of class, but in terms of perceived life chances and quality of life.

¹⁰³ Introduced in chapter three.

¹⁰⁴ Though he did some tunnel mining in the beginning, he spent most of his tenure in Balabag as an administrator for a MOSSMA community project.

productive industry, there was limited incentive for labourers to expand their social and cultural capital and they were thus left dependent on SSM. Except for the Six, the majority of those who made productive investments did so within SSM in Balabag, and thus when that was lost, so too were their investments—but the debt to the financiers (who were primarily the Six) remained.

In the previous chapter SSM was seen to have had a socioeconomic benefit to those involved and it most likely would have continued if not for the entry of LSM and the displacement of the community. This benefit should also be contrasted to some of its negative effects (especially seen in ‘gold rush’ sites), from its harmful effects on environmental and human health, to its effects on local culture, as seen in Balabag in both the growth of vices associated with a ‘gold rush’ masculinist culture and the inter-ethnic tension between settlers and indigenous peoples. Further the question of ‘what happens after?’ is one that should be of interest to researchers interested in long term upward mobility. By its nature mining has a limited lifespan, ore reserves do eventually run out. As even the Canadian CEO of TVI-Pacific noted in our conversation in July 2014: “Let me tell you something: *there is no sustainable mining.*”

Overall, long term socioeconomic mobility for those involved in Balabag SSM was extremely rare. Of the SSM capitalists only a few, primarily the “Magic Six,” were able to maintain their improvements in class position. This was achieved through the domination of mining capital in Balabag at the expense of those below them, primarily the smaller mine owners. The Six’s political and economic control allowed them to maximize profits by creating dependency amongst the second tier owners. Key to this was the regulation of CIP plant ownership. In the latter years before the TVIRD takeover they relaxed their mining regulations and increased their lending to those wishing to operate a rod mills, tunnels, and CIP Plants (which until then was limited to the Six). This accelerated production, but also invited increased indebtedness as individuals (both old and new small mining capitalists) gambled on maximizing their increased economic capital with capital investments. Many of these new investors saw little to no return on their investments as SSM ended with a TVIRD takeover in the fall of 2012.

In contrast, during this same time frame and with the threat of a LSM takeover looming, the Six’s position at the top of the hierarchy allowed them to maximize this acceleration in production and they made investments outside of the mining sector. The Six entered into the mining industry as middle peasant/petit bourgeois, and small landowners. After mining they joined the ranks of large landowners and ran businesses in the agricultural and service sector. Through their SSM operations they were also able to improve their social capital and converted these into ties with the regional elite, with one of the Six even achieving high political office at the municipal level in the 2012 elections, and another winning top political position at the barangay level.

SSM may be good for livelihoods of local people, as Nancy Peluso (2015) argues, but it also comes with a lot of problems which are only heightened after SSM comes to an end. Socioeconomic improvement needs to be viewed as tied to overall regional development that affects more than one community. In Balabag the boost in economic capital occurred in a region where overall livelihood opportunities remained poor. This limited the ways this capital could be invested by individuals and families. And it limited their ability to imagine a life outside of mining. Thus when SSM in Balabag came to an end, many found themselves right back where they started.

MY FIELD SITE IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF DIPLAHAN & BAYOG

It was after the initial set of organized interviews arranged by my local partner AdPeace that I became determined to visit the home communities of the former miners. During these offsite interviews I was surprised at how our initial estimates of attendees had exponentially grown as they brought their entire families with them. What's more, I noted how poor their health seemed to be. Unlike my past experiences with children in the Philippines, these kids were quiet and inactive, and many looked unhealthy—the parents shared that since the end of SSM that their health had noticeably deteriorated. The adults too expressed health issues, most commonly problems with their breathing, and with their backs, yet most did not have official medical diagnoses due to a lack of funds. We learned that they had all come to the interview session as they knew food would be provided and they wanted the children, who they said had not had a nutritious meal for days, to have a good meal. AdPeace had initially wished that I conduct all my interviews offsite, but this first experience strengthened my resolve that I needed to visit their home communities in order to better my understanding of their post-mining lives. I asked their timuay (timuay "Itim") if it would be possible for me to visit them and if he could help me interview more former miners. He agreed that we could meet at his daughter's home as it was better located centrally to other communities and also due to it having a better security situation—his home was much smaller and was in an area frequented by TVIRD security forces and by the private forces (or "goons" as he called them) of LSM supporters.

Travel to the interior of Diplahan to meet with timuay Itim was an exercise in alternating patience and frustration. From the one major road that connects municipalities along southern Zamboanga peninsula it was approximately a two hour trip from Pagadian City or six hours from Zamboanga City to

reach the poblacion¹⁰⁵ of Diplahan by public transit. From there I had two options: either to wait for one of the sporadic jeeps or vans that I was told left hourly, or to rent a motorcycle taxi. The former costs Php80, the latter Php200 (minimum)¹⁰⁶. When this cost is put in relation to the average pay for an agricultural worker (Php150/day when available, and a monthly total typically under Php3000) regular travel to and from Diplahan poblacion was prohibitively expensive for most. For this reason trips to the poblacion are rare occurrences for most and a drain on meagre resources. This can be problematic as the poblacion was the nearest ‘urban’ centre where government services and/or modern health services could be obtained.

I arrived at Diplahan terminal at 930am with a member AdPeace (my local partner) to act as an interpreter if needed, we had been told that jeeps and/or vans ran from five AM until noon. There was a jeep there when we arrived, and I felt myself lucky. There were only three other passengers within so I knew it would probably wait a while longer before leaving. We expected to wait at most an hour, and were told each time we asked the driver (or by the two other ‘helpers’ he had with him, or by the terminal ‘caller¹⁰⁷’) that it would be 15-20 minutes before we would leave. Despite there only being three passengers, the jeep’s roof was already packed with canvas bags filled with livestock feed and fertilizer, as well as miscellaneous boxes. Inside the jeep were large plastic bags filled with the everyday items seen in most sari-sari stores (toiletries, snacks, cigarettes, etc). On future trips livestock (including a live pig) were also seen on board. After two hours and only two more passengers arriving the jeep driver decided that it was not worth his while to make the trip in and out of the interior (“the gas will cost more than I’ll make!” he said) and we had to disembark and wait for the next vehicle. We didn’t leave the station until noon, when there were eight passengers in all—but the jeep was tightly loaded with baggage.

The ride into the interior took about an hour (on other trips it ranged from 45 minutes to 1.5 hours depending on road and weather conditions). It was almost entirely rough dirt roads with deep dips and jagged exposed rocks. On later trips after or during rains, the roads were awash in water which the drivers weaved about in as if using a memorized mental map to navigate the dangers of deep potholes and large jagged rocks which lay underneath. For obvious reasons there were more motorcycles than four wheeled

¹⁰⁵ “Poblacions” are towns that are the municipal centres, in rural Zamboanga peninsula it is in the poblacions where you can find access to social services (including health and police services), colleges (though there were no colleges in Diplahan poblacion), and relatively large retail centres.

¹⁰⁶ A return trip to the poblacion cost the same.

¹⁰⁷ The individual who stays by the station stop to call out to potential customers and to try to convince them to take their vehicle instead of another. The number of workers per vehicle was also interesting and indicative of how few jobs were available that often they were just friends/relatives of the driver/owner who were willing to work for food and/or a very small cut.

vehicles, though even then, there were many fewer vehicles than the population numbers suggested there should be. The land was virtually all made up of rice fields in various states of planting—I was later told that landowners tend not to all plant at the same time so as to use labour efficiently. It was the beginning of the second annual planting cycle (there were three in a year) when I first arrived there in mid-June, by the end of July all the fields were verdant green. Carabaos (a type of water buffalo) were more commonly seen than mechanized agricultural machines, though some small manually operated push tractors were occasionally seen. Field workers calf high in water could be seen working the fields in large teams, their hands darting in and out of the water like human sewing machines—with each stitch leaving a rice stalk standing. The homes we passed were mostly made of traditional construction techniques using bamboo, wood, and nipa. A few were made of blocky grey unpainted cinderblock, and some of the roofs were of corrugated iron. Though there would also be the occasional home with painted walls, gardens, fences and satellite dishes that stood out for their uniqueness—examples of class as performed via residential architecture.

Timuay Itim's daughter's home was tucked some two hundred metres away from the road down a thin dirt path that skirted a couple rice fields. We arrived just minutes before a torrential downpour. Timuay Itim had previously told me that the home (constructed of wood, with a mix of thatch and old corrugated iron roofing) was made mostly from scavenged items as they did not have the funds to purchase them new. I was reminded of the ravaged elementary school in Canatuan, site of the first TVIRD mine in the Philippines. I was there in 2005, less than a decade after it was built, and all that remained was a skeletal facade. The former small-scale miners had used it to scavenge building materials after their livelihoods as miners came to an end.

Laundry lines were stretched across various fruit trees that grew near timuay Itim's daughter's home. On those lines laundry, hanging semi dry, began to sway and then were one by one flung off by the wind. Timuay Itim's daughter scrambled to collect the various items from the ground, which were all clearly well worn with faded colours. Some were obviously re-stitched and had frayed ends. We were under cover just in time as the sky opened up and all that could be heard was the cacophony of wind through trees, rain pounding on corrugated iron roofing, and the occasional slam of fruit hitting the home. As with the modern painted homes that displayed class as performance, this home too spoke of the embodied class of its peasant residents.

Timuay Itim and the daughter's husband weren't home, the husband was working in the fields (an occasional job for the local landlords that could be found perhaps two weeks in a month, paying approximately Php150 a day), and the timuay was at a community meeting for the many local residents

still holding out hope that one day they'd be allowed to return to mine on Mt. Balabag. The inside of the home was basically a living room of sorts, the floor was earthen, and there was no 'furniture' in the sense you'd see in urban homes, just a couple simple wooden benches, a raised wooden platform that was covered in a small harvest from empty fields that they plant in, an old 1990s era TV and DVD player, and a short stack of pirated DVD movies without cases. In the corner of the inside of home was a relatively large raised platform with bamboo walls that made up the bedroom, mats were spread on the floor for sleeping. On the opposite end of the home was their kitchen, a 'sink' made of bamboo slats with gaps in between so that when the washing was done it would spill through the gaps to the ground outside the home, and an indoor hearth where they would cook in blackened cast iron pots over an open flame. There was no indoor plumbing, only gallon sized plastic jugs filled with water from a nearby spring. There was no bathroom, they would use the fields or a neighbours squat toilet a few houses down. And behind the home there was a shallow well of non-potable water used for washing and bathing.

This home was similar to the neighbours in appearance, though later I would learn that some neighbours did have more possessions. In the barangay there were also a handful that had better constructed homes. These tend to be for families with local businesses like the local large sari-sari owner, the mechanic, and the barangay captain¹⁰⁸. Here, as in the other rural communities I would visit, there was an inverse relationship between proximity to the road and level of poverty. Many if not most of the homes in this village had family members involved in SSM, though most had been labourers. Though before the 1970s this was a predominantly Subanen area, there was now only small population of Subanen in this barangay, with most living in the smaller sitios further off from the main rural road (or even further afield in remote mountain communities).

Timuay Itim, despite personally viewing his family as "poor," was one of the more successful Subanen during the SSM era. In that period he was able to rise from the position of tunnel miner to the owner of an independent tunnel, a rod mill, and eventually to a CIP plant in the last months of SSM operation. However the class processes of Balabag did not hinge on ownership alone and factors such as his 'Subanen-ness' meant greater hurdles and different long term life chances. As one of the original Subanen residents of Mt. Balabag he was part of the group most impacted by displacement, the group that had no home to return to because Balabag was their home. Some of these pre-mining inhabitants, like the family of timuay Itim, moved down to the lowlands to live in the communities of the settlers. Others, migrated further afield to new upland sites or to join family in upland Subanen communities. For those that relocated to the sitios and barangays of Diplahan and Bayog they cited the difficulties of living in

¹⁰⁸ "Barangay captains" are the local level community leaders. They make up the lowest level of local government unit (LGU).

remote communities. After almost twenty years of integration with settlers their children were no longer familiar with that kind of life and so they chose to join the agricultural labouring class.



Figure 1.8: Rural Bayog homes. On the left in sitio away from the main road, on the right are three homes next to the main rural road (note: though the homes were typical, the picturesque landscaping was not).

In mining-induced displacement literature some of the common effects of the loss of land to LSM included a toll on socioeconomic, cultural, and psychological well-being. This was best seen in ‘the resettlement effect’ where the loss of community had severe impacts on economic, social, and cultural capital. For the Subanen of Balabag the loss of their land not only meant a loss of pre-SSM livelihoods, but also their social and cultural networks. This was further exacerbated the difficulties they experienced as they were now scattered from each other and from the mutual support community could have provided. As an example of the impact on their cultural and social capital, timuay Itim, one of the traditional leaders of the Balabag Subanen community, was virtually unknown as a timuay in his daughter’s community. The Subanen that lived there had a different timuay. Timuay Itim had to travel to different communities to meet his constituents, or they had to travel to him. With his community scattered his position and responsibilities became more difficult to manage and he expressed doubts if he could maintain the position.

Where my time with timuay Itim first introduced me to the communities where the former miners returned, my time with Cory allowed me greater access due to his wider familiarity with the miners of Balabag, due to his former position as a MOSSMA employee, and also due to his cultural familiarity with the non-indigenous settlers, which when combined with his Subanen ethnicity helped others see him as a

cultural bridge. Cory lived in a more populous central barangay in between Diplahan and Bayog, and through the use of a motorcycle (borrowed or rented) we traversed the dirt roads that connected barangays and sitios to conduct interviews. Cory lived on a raised home constructed of weathered wood which would sway in heavy wind. Rusted corrugated iron roofing gave protection from the elements, but due to age, also leaked in the rain. Like the home of timuay Itim's daughter there was no indoor plumbing and food was cooked in an indoor hearth. There were two key differences between the homes of timuay Itim and Cory: 1) Cory's electrical connection ran twenty-four hours (rather than just in the evenings for timuay Itim); and 2) they had a simple squat toilet in a structure outside the home (the waste drained into a nearby canal).

In the weeks ahead I would have a chance to see more of the communities the former mine labourers returned to, and to see that even beyond this initial impression there were a greater variety of living spaces. The homes in the barangays (being the larger rural communities) like that of Cory and timuay Itim tended to be as I described above. Most had electricity, though the amount of electrical appliances tended to be few—for example, none of the labourer homes I visited had a refrigerator or stove. None of the homes I visited had indoor plumbing, and so the people relied on a combination of wells and spring water that they paid for by the gallon. Deeper into the rural interior, the homes were generally smaller and more rustic (even the presence of corrugated roofing became less common), and some did not have an electrical connection. There was also a general divide between indigenous and settler families, with the former tending to live in much more basic conditions and further from the road. When speaking of post-Balabag poverty timuay Itim and others highlighted that “even here there are squatters, it's not just in the cities”—these were landless families that built homes where there was unclaimed space. Despite being in rural communities, finding unclaimed land was easier said than done, especially if one wanted to live relatively near a road. The timuays (along with some MOSSMA leaders) spoke to me of how some of the poorest Subanen relocated to new mountain communities (much like how the original inhabitants of Balabag arrived there after the Visayan migration to the Diplahan lowlands in the 1970s). These communities were not accessible by road and could be up to a six hour uphill hike into the forest. For the rural landless poor who decided to build without land title in the officially recognized barangays and sitios of Diplahan and Bayog, the homes tended to be located in “danger zones” as delineated by municipal flood and landslide maps. I spoke to one such set of families that lived next to, what was at the time of my visit, a small river. The homes were unique in the sense that they were built on stilts and tended to sit about ten feet off the ground. I was told that during the rainy season the area floods. From a “normal” of about knee deep water, to flash floods that would go up past the height of a person during heavy rains.



LANDSLIDE HAZARD MAP BAYOG

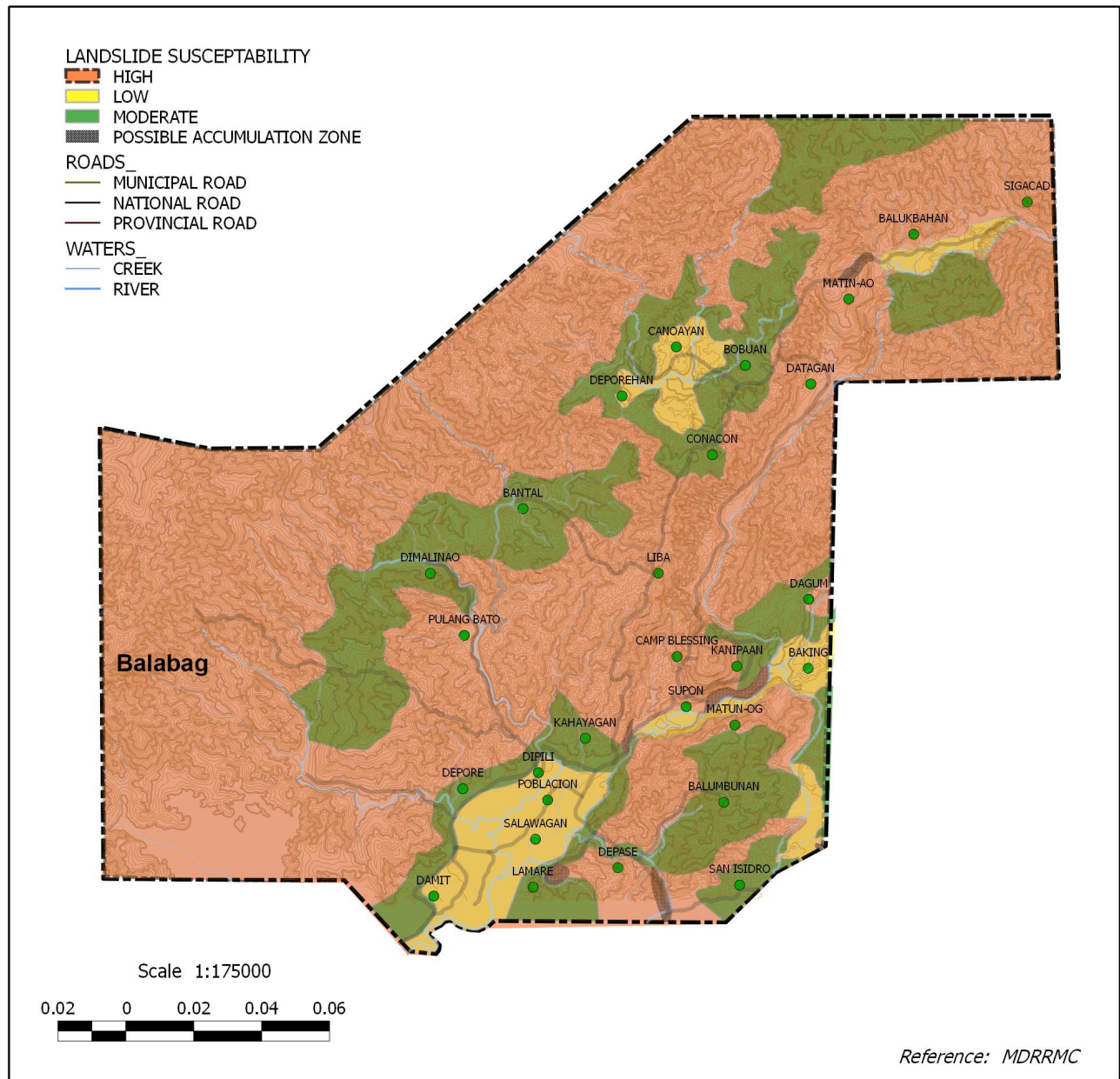


Figure 1.9: Landslide hazard map for Bayog (Municipal Profile, 2014).

HEALTH ISSUES

As I noted earlier, one of my first impressions was the apparently poor health of the former labourers. The main health concern they expressed was that since the end of SSM the quality of their food intake had seriously declined. As discussed in interviews and noted in my field journal, domestic fights over food was one of the most common issues in post-SSM communities. The following is expanded from my field journal dated 23 June 2014, my first morning in the home of timuay Itim:

The sun rose over the home of the neighbour to the east, the couple and their children (one eight, the other just a few months old) were awake. This was the same couple we could overhear fighting well into the evening last night. It began in hushed tones. They knew there was a visitor in a nearby house and they reminded each other constantly to keep their voices down—of course timuay Itim and I still heard them as in these rural areas sound carried. When midnight passed these reminders were forgotten and their voices had become raised. Timuay Itim told me this was a regular event, virtually every night. Their baby could be heard crying here and there but never for too long—which seemed strange considering the volume of the voices that echoed past the thin wood walls and across the surrounding neighbourhood. The fight was about how the breadwinner had yet again come home without food nor money, yet smelling of alcohol. That day he had done day labour planting rice, and should have returned with Php150, instead he came back with Php30 (\$0.75 Cdn). The one who stayed home with the children screamed in exasperation that their baby was hungry and yet the other had spent the money on drink rather than food. The partner replied that it was because of all this yelling that he didn't return directly after work, that the stress of being home drove them to drink.

It was around 6am when timuay Itim joined me on the porch. He moved slowly, coughing a lot, and it was clear to me that he was ill. Health care is private and out-of-pocket here, and as there is no local doctor in the barangays, seeing a medical professional means spending money to travel to the poblacion or to the city, and as public vehicles only travel in and out of the rural areas in the mornings, additional charges could also be incurred for overnight accommodations and of course food. Despite only being in his 40s Timuay Itim is frailer and weaker than most indigenous men I've met who even in their 60s and 70s tend to be robust. He slumped down with a morning coffee and lit a cigarette.

The financial boon of the SSM era had provided miners with enough earnings to eat well and provide for daily needs and wants. This was without doubt a major reason why SSM was remembered so fondly. The long term negative consequences to their environment and health were known to them, but their personal cost-benefit calculations overwhelmingly saw income outweighing the known risks. After SSM ended those benefits ended as well, but the risks lived on. As one Bayog area timuay who was never involved in SSM shared with me, “there are a lot of illnesses in the area now. It started when MOSSMA arrived... from chemicals they released” (interview June 2014). In one still-operational small scale mine I visited in the municipality of Bayog I witnessed some of the problematic practices that could result in environmental and human health issues.



Figure 1.10: On the upper left is a CIP plant. On the lower right the community garden and empty bottles of liquor. In the middle is a tailings pond.

Post-mining illnesses were common to virtually all my interviewees who had worked as miners for over a decade, and some even spoke to me in hushed tones¹⁰⁹ about the effect on non-miners as well, especially to the children. Timuay Itim, a SSM supporter himself, shared that he knew that mining brought health consequences—only that it was something he felt they had to live with. As an original resident of Balabag he was at first hesitant to support the miners, but it soon became clear to him that SSM was in Balabag whether he wanted it or not, and to join them at least provided a livelihood and opportunities for their children. He shared that the most common symptoms felt by the miners were related to their lungs, and to their hips and backs. Timuay Itim himself, as reported to me by his daughter had long been ill. She believed it to be “TB” (though “TB” was the go-to self-diagnosis by many of those who were ill post mining and could not afford a medical diagnosis, it generally seemed to mean that a person had trouble with their lungs). She regrets how much mining had taken from them, including the health of her family members.

Emilio Cana, the tunnel miner and independent tunnel owner whom I spoke of in the previous chapter, was another interviewee who expressed problems with “TB”. He had become so ill that he was left unable to work and was dependent on donations from friends and family. At the time of our interview I learned that Emilio currently lived in a simple home of scavenged wood in a barangay of Bayog. Like with many other older miners he was sick and weak, long suffering from a lung illness and a bad back, though a lack of funds has prevented him from a medical diagnosis. With the remainder of his savings from SSM he purchased a hectare of land on which he built his home, but his illness prevented him from planting on it. Instead he allowed neighbours to plant and asked for a cut, but he felt that he was being cheated. Emilio blames LSM saying, “what kind of life is this? They’ve taken the future of my children¹¹⁰.”

The health of the children was also a concern as complaints of regular illness were common. Some of this can be attributed to their poor post-SSM diet, but others seem to implicate other causes. Common symptoms reported to me by parents of children who lived in Balabag spoke of persistent skin conditions (‘galis’), and even of blackened toe and finger-nails that would fall off. Most of the children who lived in Balabag were Subanen, and many of those were the original residents of the land¹¹¹. The

¹⁰⁹ I note the “hushed tones” as it was clear that the majority did not want to disparage SSM in any way, even if it had impacted their current health.

¹¹⁰ All quotations in this paper from local interviewees are from the authors field notes. Interviews conducted in June and July 2014.

¹¹¹ As mentioned earlier the families of most of the miners stayed in the lowlands. Only a small number relocated there with their families.

blame for the children's poor health went to the safety standards of chemical use in the mining process, as one Balabag resident noted:

The SSMs would dump chemicals everywhere, they didn't care where... the kids would play in the chemical water and some died, they must have swallowed some of the water... (interview June 2015).

The pollution of the SSM era was still blamed for the fevers and diarrhoea which continued to be common ailments for many in the community, miner and non-miner alike. Respondents believed that some of the chemicals may continue to make their way into the community's water supply via the rivers and streams that originate from the mountain.

POST-SSM LIVELIHOODS

In agricultural communities like these the days tended to start early as working the fields tended to be more productive in the early morning before the heat of the sun becomes overbearing. In hacienda areas in the other parts of the country I've previously visited many peasant farmers tend to take a break from about 11am until about 2pm to avoid that mid-day sun. But in those areas the system was closer to traditional feudalism in the sense that peasant families all had specific regular areas to till (the landlord receiving their cut at the end of each planting season) and they tended to live on or near that land. In the Diplahan and Bayog interior the field-hands did not have regular work on any specific field, they worked in fields that needed work that day. Word of mouth spread the news of which fields needed work when, and labourers were hired on a first-come, first-employed basis. One would travel to that field in the morning and the field manager (who was only regular employee of the landowner and tended to live on or near the site) would take on as many workers as was needed that day. Work was not guaranteed and some would travel to a place only to find that they were too late, or that no labourers were needed that day. Due to the irregularity, prospective workers would sometimes travel far afield for work. In my interviews it was common for agricultural labourers to tell me that they would travel as far as three to five hours away

¹¹² In these cases they would become short term regulars, staying in those areas until the planting was done. This meant staying for a week or more at minimum in order to make the travel costs worthwhile.

if they knew there was work available¹¹². Day labourers were paid by how much work they did, averaging P150 for a twelve hour work day¹¹³.

My interviewees also spoke of other former Balabag labourers who did not return to their home communities after the TVIRD takeover. Foremost were those who had no home community to return to, the original Subanen inhabitants of Mt. Balabag. Some of these Subanen had organized post-SSM with grassroots and legal organizations and were still making legal and political attempts to reclaim their community on Mt. Balabag. Other former mine labourers left for the cities to find work in sectors like construction (usually the men) or as domestic helpers (the women). While most stayed within a day's bus travel from their communities, a small handful travelled to other islands and even to Manila using the remaining savings they had—and others used those savings for their children to have this opportunity. The most common post-SSM livelihoods revolved around agriculture and other SSM sites closer afield. Some spoke of leaving the community for weeks at a time when they hear of work in other municipalities, “I’ve gone as far as Ipil [four hours by bus from Diplahan poblacion] to do day work with farms,” said one respondent who went on to explain that the reason for the long stays were due to the cost of travel. They would simply live with other workers and have room and board deducted from their pay. Others went off to other SSM operations, though at the time of my fieldwork, there were no others in the peninsula that matched the yields of Balabag (or of Canatuan before it).

Julio Cana (the son of Emilio), whom I wrote of earlier, was one such former miner that left Balabag first in search of new SSM work only to find it unrewarding and from there relocated to Zamboanga City. I spoke with Julio at his residence, which he shared with two other families (he himself was single) in an urban poor community¹¹⁴. He sought out a new SSM site after Balabag as it was the only job he had ever known but left after seven months due to the work being much more difficult, more dangerous, and far less lucrative. The ore there was scarce and of poor quality and the tunnels ran deeper into the ground and were more prone to accidents than in Balabag. At best he claimed that he earned P2000 a month, P800 less than the average wage for an agricultural worker and P8000 less than an average month in Balabag. Leaving this work he went to Zamboanga City and found work in construction which paid P150 a day, but he found this work difficult not only on his body but also to his spirit as he

¹¹³ Walking with timuay Itim one day we saw groups of men (and a few women) in a flooded rice paddy. They combined slow methodical body movements with a rapid fire ‘stitching’ movement with their planting hand. I asked timuay Itim about their exact pay and was told that it was usually about Php1 per bundle of seedlings.

¹¹⁴ Zamboanga City is eight hours away at a cost of four days at his current salary, from his father Emilio whom he had not seen since their departure from Balabag.

spoke of long backbreaking hours in the sun with a boss that was cruel. At the time of our interview (July 2014) he was working as an ice candy vendor which paid him based on the amount he sold, which he claimed averaged out to about the same as construction, but was far less stressful.

I also spoke with a woman (in her late 30s-early 40s with five children aged 4 to 17) who was to about to begin work as a domestic helper in one of the poblacions (interview July 2014). Her husband had been a miner since before MOSSMA was established, beginning in the previous SSM in Depore in 1994. The couple both relocated to Balabag when it began operations. He worked in the tunnels and she as a sari-sari store minder before transferring to a local bar. After TVIRD claimed Balabag he relocated to a new SSM site three hours away, but similar to Julio's experience the mine was less lucrative. She says that he would remit money back when he could but this was rare and not nearly enough to support their family. He had not returned home in months as the cost of travel would eat away at the meagre income. This woman had moved back in with her parents six months previous due their financial situation, and it had reached a critical point. At the time of our meeting she had just accepted a job in one of the municipal poblacions to work as a maid and nanny for a wealthier family, she was due to begin the following week:

[Balabag] was easy money... now it's just like punching the moon [*'suntok sa buwan,'* an aphorism referring to a hopeless act]. When my husband comes home I don't know if he's bringing money back... this month he hasn't sent anything back so far...

That's it. I have to start working now, I'm about to start next week...

I have to leave my kids because if I don't they won't be able to go to school. I should have started this past week, but [the employer] told me to make sure that everything's ok with my kids first because 'once you're here you're here'. So I'm waiting for my mister, he has to take care of them for now—but I don't know when he's coming back really because we can't get in touch with him because [he hasn't been answering the phone]. He doesn't even know my plan yet, I don't know if he'll accept staying home with the kids. But I have to go through with it, I've already gotten an advance [from the employer] because we didn't have enough money for food. [July 2014]

SOCIAL IMPACTS

Overall, the situation regarding employment and earnings opportunities was seen as dire by the former Balabag residents and their families. Related to this lack of opportunity, my interviewees spoke of the increase in crime in their barangays and sitios after the end of SSM. They told me of how this was new¹¹⁵: even though they saw themselves as poor before SSM, theft then was rare. It was especially the women whom I was able to interview who would open up about these issues. The timuays I spoke with were also quite candid about the problem. The problem of theft was also compounded by the increased interest in gambling reported by my interview subjects, as well as the growth of the drug use. While neither of these issues were unique in and of themselves in the Philippines, my respondents noted that there seemed to be an increase in their use since the arrival of SSM. If true, this was likely due to the increase in earnings¹¹⁶. With the end of mining these had become entrenched habits and addictions. As noted in the previous chapter, the disincentive towards productive investment for the majority of the SSMs lifespan put limitations to upwards mobility in class positions. In its place the relatively better earning miners performed class mobility in classed consumption and class embodiment—some of which saw an outlet in social vices.

On one occasion my translator¹¹⁷, a former user of shabu (methamphetamine) himself, pointed out that the expressions of many of the passing motorcycle taxi drivers seemed familiar to him. “I know those eyes,” he told me, “that blank look that looks like they’re not here, that’s shabu.” Norito (an original Subanen resident of Balabag introduced in chapter four, and a former employee within the drug trade), later corroborated the claim that drug use was rampant in these rural places. He told me that the local drug dealers would buy the product for approximately Php150 “a package¹¹⁸” in the urban centres and resold here for Php300. They told me that for a new user a package can last a few days, but for long time users sometimes they would need two or three packages a night. According to multiple interviewees drugs entered the community by various means. They shared stories of rich local families being involved in the

¹¹⁵ It should also be noted that there is of course a difficulty in reports based on memory. What people recall, especially after a traumatic event such as the loss of their livelihoods after Balabag, should not be understood as ontologically “real”. Their recollection of happier times during or previous to SSM should be understood within the context of their situation at the time of my fieldwork, as a narrative that helps them make sense of their present in relation to their past.

¹¹⁶ As explained in the previous chapter.

¹¹⁷ This translator was not personally involved in Balabag SSM himself, nor was he local to Diplahan or Bayog.

¹¹⁸ I was never able to get a clear picture of how large an amount that was by weight, just that it was smaller than a pinky fingernail.

drug trade, and stories implicating members of the municipal police as local drug runners into these rural places.

The rise in these social vices was possibly one factor adding to perceived increased crime rates in the communities. In my view this would only be a compounding factor to the frustration felt from the loss of livelihood with the end of SSM. As many respondents noted, most did not expect an end to SSM, and felt that LSM had “stolen” their futures from them. This unsurprisingly can act as a push factor towards the escape felt via drug use and/or towards theft as a means to supplement a lifestyle that was felt to be inadequate. Similarities can be seen to the frustration felt by the Subanen in the late seventies, which, as recalled by Norito and others, led to some turning to crime as a means to gain personal power.

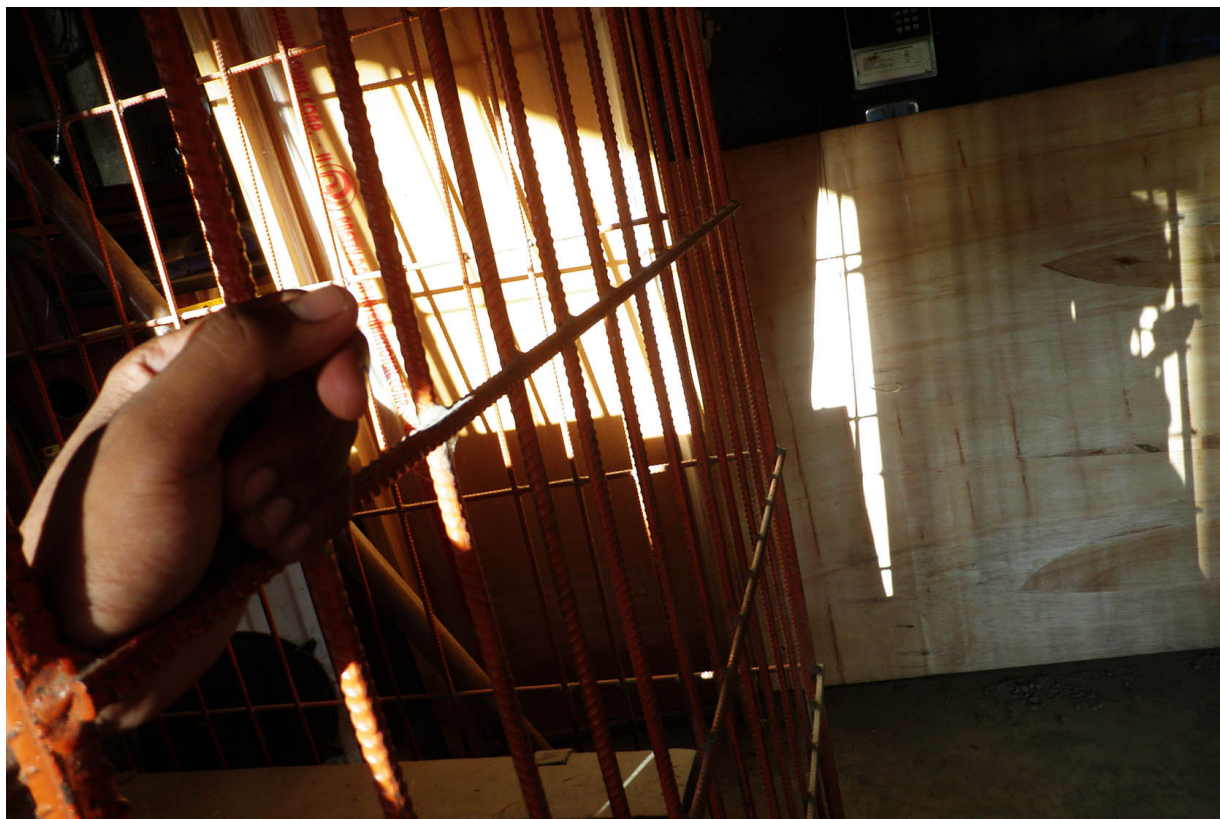


Figure 1.11: One of the barangay ‘prisons.’ (Note: The person in the photo is not actually inside the cage, I asked my companion at the time to make his shadow *appear* to be inside.)

On one evening walking back to timuay Itim’s daughter’s home we saw many young people by one of the local stores. They had just installed a television and gambling machine for regional horse racing, a form of gambling common to the Philippine urban places but rare in the rural areas due to the need for equipment. I asked timuay Itim about the source of the teens’ money that they were using for

gambling and intoxicants. I was told that theft from one's parents was one of the most common problems. He shared that "many don't go to school, even though they tell their parents they go. So they get money for school that they use for drinking, drugs, and gambling" (interview June 2014). Home break-ins were also reportedly common as many of the homes were of simple construction and easy to enter. One of my interviewees was an elderly woman who came to speak with me at the home of timuay Itim. She spoke of the lack of good work since the end of SSM and of how her sons agricultural labour and her own harvesting of bamboo from the forest to sell was not enough to make ends meet. Later I was told by timuay Itim that she was not to be trusted and that her family were known thieves. Her family, he claimed, had been accused of, and punished for, breaking into homes in the past (interviews June 2014).

These remote villages and hamlets were too far from the municipal centres to have a regular police presence, and so this work was left to the community. They would elect local "tanods" to act as local peace and order officials, and if a problem could not be resolved through mediation, the bigger barangays had makeshift prisons that they used as a form of punishment (only if they felt that the crime was too unmanageable would the municipal police be called in). I saw two of the barangay 'prisons' for myself: one was set of cages approximately seven feet high and six feet across that were in the local basketball court; the other was a cave-like bunker with a ceiling too low to stand in under the community gazebo near the public market. Both were obviously very public, and both were regularly used. For the cages in the basketball court I was told that the longest someone had been incarcerated there was for five months. That individual was the son of the elderly woman I spoke of above, he was caught thieving from homes. And I was witness to the gazebo being used when one evening I came across a crowd of people by the structure in the near dark (as there were no street lights in the community). Inside were five men, aged from fifteen to their early thirties. They were incarcerated for the evening for drunken misconduct and threatening violence after a night of gambling at a sari-sari owned by a purported drug dealer—some of them I had previously interviewed days before.

IN CONVERSATION WITH THE WOMEN

The impacts of the loss of livelihood, and the perception of the loss of the secure future SSM gave was acutely felt by the women in these communities. Women were the primary care-givers and secondary economic contributors to the family within a system that retained feudal relations not just economically but also socially. The cooking, cleaning, and child rearing were primarily women's responsibility while the men would leave during the day to look for work—even if later it would be learned that there was no work for them that day. Though agricultural labour was primarily work done by men, some women also

participated if their children were old enough to care for themselves or had someone to care for them during the day.

During my time with Timuay Itim there were afternoons or days that were spent at or near his home as he had other responsibilities to take care of. And so I had some time alone with the neighbours, and it was here that I was able to gain some very insightful interviews with the women. This was difficult at first as often they would ask that I just speak to the men, but I wanted to speak with them as well as I felt that their perspective would help flesh out aspects of everyday life that the men would not be privy to. Moreover, women were impacted in ways often distinct from men, and often resulting from the actions of the men themselves. My approach to gain their trust was to try to help with housework. By helping with chores I also hoped that they would feel more relaxed with my presence, and I hoped that in sharing their labour¹¹⁹ we would be able to break down some of the walls between us.

This was how I came to know “Leia,” a young Subanen woman in her early twenties and one of my most informative and enthusiastic interview subjects (first introduced in chapter five). She was also one of the original residents of Balabag, and though she was not directly involved in SSM her family was and she had lived in Balabag during the SSM era. Though reserved at first, I spent some afternoons with her and her children helping process their meagre harvest of corn. Through the shared activity of removing dried corn kernels from the husk I was able to gain many insights regarding her experiences as an indigenous person and a woman. We discussed elements of life in Balabag that many of the men would only allude to: about violence, community prejudices, and social vices that plagued SSM from the beginning (these aspects will be discussed further in the following section).

Post-SSM she moved to this barangay with her family and to supplement the modest income her husband brought in via agricultural labour, they planted crops (mostly corn) in parts of field that were unused, often on the corners and/or boundaries of the fields of landowners. They would ask permission and provide the landowner with a ten percent share of the harvest. Corn was one of the main crops of the municipalities of Bayog and Diplahan as it was cheaper to both buy and grow. The corn was ground up and cooked in the same way as rice, though it was grittier and a bit rougher on the digestion for those unaccustomed. For many of my interviews with former labourers, corn with salt (or some other savoury, or even sweet, element) was a common meal. In Leia’s home the dried corn was piled atop a large, well used, tarpaulin and using one’s hands the kernels would be torn off the husk. Their experienced hands simply seemed to grab hold of the corn and with a (seemingly easy) twisting motion the job would be

¹¹⁹ Though I was also aware from previous experiences in the Philippines that if I overworked myself that would lead to an inverse outcome: that I would shame them for not caring for their guest.

done in three to five seconds. To the family's amusement my hands were incapable of the speed nor the technique. I used my thumb (first the right, then after it blistered, the left) to painstakingly remove kernels row by row.

During the work Leia opened up to me about the difficulty of life for the women in the community. With SSM gone it was a return to agricultural labour for most. Leia spoke about the appetite for social vices that began in Balabag, and got carried over to their post-SSM lives. And she spoke to me in hushed tones that many of the women experience domestic violence (most commonly verbal and psychological, but not so rarely it also became physical) because of the frustrations experienced by the men.

There's still a lot [of drinking and drugs]. It's gotten worse. So much. Some they can't even get enough to eat because they get drunk then they'd go home and it's the wife that suffers... beatings. Because they say, 'I have nothing left for food,' and then... the kids cry, and then he doesn't know what to do. You know how it is here, there's no easy work, there's only small labour jobs sometimes. The livelihoods are few and far between (interviews June 2014).

Claims of spousal abuse were confirmed by my interview with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) office in Diplahan poblacion (interview July 2014). They reported that the communities of former Balabag miners had the highest reported incidents in Zamboanga Peninsula of not only spousal abuse, but also rape and incest. Their records show that these levels began to increase in the mid-2000s as the SSM operations grew.

Leia believed that often the men weren't "smart about money" and would spend it on the things to help them forget their problems: alcohol, drugs, gambling. "They don't think about the children's education sometimes, they just want to forget" (interview June 2014). The loss of funds for the education of their children was also something that the mothers spoke of with regret. Though they admit that during the MOSSMA era many youth decided to drop out of high school or college to join SSM, at least families at that time could afford schooling and encouraged it. Since 2012, the funds had become more difficult to allocate. Though schooling was technically free in the Philippines to the end of high school, there were ancillary costs that made it restrictive for poor families: from the cost of transportation, to school uniforms and supplies, school meals, and school "projects" (funds charged by the school at their discretion to pay for various school or student needs). 'Free' education wasn't actually free. And as discussed in the demographics section (chapter four), while all barangays had an elementary school, high schools were only in the largest barangays, and the nearest college in Bayog poblacion.

The women were expected to do the cooking—and I personally noticed—they seemed to also be the last to eat. I experienced this in the homes I visited, the women wouldn't eat with the men or children who were served first. Even if I asked them to join us they would usually tell me that they were not yet hungry and would eat later. And unfortunately, later there would be little food left, many nights I saw them left with just a small amount of corn and a smaller amount of leftovers. One of the most common (non-income related) complaints I heard was that there was not enough to eat on a regular basis, and that protein-rich meals rare. The women especially lamented that often children would go to school hungry and/or have no lunch. In my time with them I noted that the majority of their calories came from boiled corn. This was supplemented by the in-season fruits that could be freely harvested from nearby trees (in my time there these were bananas and rambutan), and perhaps twice a week they would have dried salted fish or small amounts of meat (mostly fat and bones). Timuay Itim's daughter told me,

in one day, sometimes, we can't even eat three times. Sometimes we can only eat once. Oh my. At night we'd have congee¹²⁰, that's what we do. I'd cry. Sometimes I think, I can't last. I'm going to die here. My stomach hurts, because I'm not used to it. [...] In the mountains... we eat more nutritiously there. We didn't experience hardship (interview June 2014).

With Cory's family I had a more difficult time connecting with his wife as I didn't have much time alone with her. Cory was a devout evangelical Christian and I would join him in church and heard many sermons about the proper gender roles for the members of the community. His wife was a housewife with a full high school education. She was very quiet and always deferred to her husband when we spoke. Except for one brief exchange, we never really talked, and to be fair Cory was so diligent and enthusiastic in taking me around to meet people that we never had much of a chance. In that one exchange (I wouldn't call it a full conversation), Cory had stepped out and as his wife served me breakfast she asked me about Canada. She said that "it must be wonderful there, life must be easier." She asked me about domestic work (she was referring to Canada's Live-in Caregiver Program) as she had heard that Canada was a place where Filipinas could go find lucrative work as a caregiver. She was concerned that her husband's meagre salary was not enough to ensure their children a good life. I spoke to her about the live-in caregiver program and the hardships faced by some of the program participants, and that Canadian citizenship was not necessarily guaranteed. "It's still better than life here," was her response (field notes, July 2014).

¹²⁰ "*Lugao*" in tagalog. This is a savoury rice porridge made with leftover rice (or ground corn).

THE MINE OWNERS AFTER SSM

In stark contrast to the post-SSM lives of the majority of the labourers (indigenous and non-indigenous alike), the Balabag elite (the “Magic Six”) were the outliers, able to see socioeconomic improvement (in terms of class mobility and overall quality of life) in the long term for their families. They were able to see their investments grow—and along with it their forms of capital—and they were able to rise to the ranks of regional bourgeois owning multiple means of production in multiple forms of industry. And though they were not the only individuals to earn in the millions (of pesos) from SSM, the other local capitalists shared one key element in common with the labourers in their post-Balabag lives: they were not able to rise above their pre-SSM class position¹²¹. Also for some of these smaller owners their post-SSM lives left them with relatively worse economic capital relative to their pre-SSM days. Though they often were able to purchase land and homes, and even some small local businesses (or improved upon previously owned businesses), they were saddled with large debts—often to the Six who were their financiers—that they were not sure they would be able to repay. As Richard Ligan, Provincial ENRO (Environment and Natural Resources Office) for Zamboanga del Sur noted in our interview, *“if you conduct a survey of the miners, you’ll see that only the financiers got rich, the others remained what they were before [...] and that’s despite there being more money there than in farming (interview July 2015).”*

THE MAGIC SIX

From the very first interview in the field I conducted with an activist from Bayog, the name of “Ginto¹²²” was brought up as one of the few “rags to riches” stories of Balabag. Ginto was spoken of with a kind of reverence, as an individual with no social vices and who through personal initiative turned both Balabag, and themselves, into a success. In this initial interview (June 2014) there was no emphasis on Ginto’s class origins, instead the focus was that she was “smart with money”. Over the course of a few weeks I attempted to correspond with Ginto via phone calls and text messages. After initially answering my calls, it became clear that she was suspicious of me and told me that she was currently too busy to be interviewed (Filipino culture generally frowns on outright saying “no”). Her suspicions could be partially traced to the outstanding legal cases between MOSSMA and TVIRD, as well to allegedly leaked documents from TVIRD that had outright threatened a few of the bigger names attached to SSM in Balabag. Ginto only finally agreed to speak with me after one of her close friends, whom I was

¹²¹ Even though within SSM they may have seen class mobility.

¹²² First introduced in chapter five as one of the first investors of the MOSSMA era and member of the “Magic Six”.

introduced to via my local partner organization (AdPeace), vouched for me and my research. We met at one of the large (non-mining related) businesses Ginto's family operated in the poblacion¹²³ of one of the nearby municipalities to Balabag. It was a lavish place—the sort I had become quite unaccustomed to in the field—it was cooled by multiple air conditioners, had high ceilings, large windows, and clean tile floors that smelt of bleach.

Ginto was kind, soft spoken, and very simply dressed. If you met her on the street you'd not think for a moment that she was anyone special. Her classed performance was quite counter to my expectation of 'new-money' stereotypical behaviour and appearance. Ginto was open with her time and we spoke off and on over the course of about five hours, though our conversation was continuously interrupted by phone calls regarding her business dealings. One of the first things Ginto told me in our interview was that she was finished with mining (in Balabag or anywhere else) as she now had other means to earn income that were more secure than SSM. Another member of the Six was even more adamant in his detachment from mining, stating repeatedly to me that he had no more connections to the area and did not have much to say about SSM to me (his stated concern was the welfare of the Subanen who he saw as being exploited across the region¹²⁴). After the closure of SSM in Balabag all but one of the Six left the rural interior and relocated into urban centres and began lives quite different from Balabag or from their lives previous. I saw the homes of three of the four Magic Six members I interviewed, they reminded me of the large mansions found in Manila's gated communities.

For the Magic Six not only did their economic capital increase with SSM but so too did their social capital as their success in Balabag established them as the top capitalists which extended their network to other elites through both political and economic channels.

Modesty aside, there are already numbers of local people who have accumulated wealth and improved their living condition expand and diverse their investments or businesses thereby also helped other people through employment in the different business endeavors that they have entered into outside the mine site (MOSSMA 2011¹²⁵).

¹²³ "Poblacion" meaning the central town of the municipality

¹²⁴ This member of the Six was one of three that ran for political office in the 2012 elections. Two ran for high municipal positions, the other for a lower level LGU. In our interview what he wanted to speak about was his plans to help the Subanen gain legal recognition for their land claims. He spoke of how even after gaining land title they would need help in managing these lands and that his office was doing its best to help set up training and create foundations to help them.

¹²⁵ The grammar was left uncorrected in this quote from a MOSSMA pamphlet entitled "MONTE DE ORO.... THE LAND, THE MINE, THE PEOPLE... still, the continuing struggle!" Obtained from a former MOSSMA official.

The economic capital that SSM brought was accumulated and invested into a variety of non-mining related ventures ranging from greater agricultural land holdings (outside of Balabag), to agricultural industries, to service and other commercial properties. Further there were attempts to trade their newly increased capital into political power which proved successful for two of the Six (with a third losing by a very narrow margin). While politics may not seem an ‘investment’ at first, high positions of political power were seen by some Philippine activists and academics (as well as beyond) as one of the most lucrative sources of wealth in the country. Described by Philippine activists as “bureaucrat capitalism,” political positions were seen as a means of enriching oneself and one’s family by incorporating themselves as key lynchpins in a neo-colonial network that benefits from the semi-feudal nature of the Philippine rural economy. Through this system one can use one’s position of political power to benefit from both legal and extra-legal dealings with Western governments and companies (Aguilan 1973; Quimpo 2005).

THE OTHER MINE OWNERS

The former SSM owners who were not part of the Magic Six spoke of a different post-mining life, one that shared a key point in common with the former labourers: while SSM had increased their economic capital for a time, and while some had made various levels of investment outside of mining, when SSM in Balabag ended, they found their overall class positions unchanged from the pre-SSM status quo. These individuals remained in the rural communities around Balabag and though they tended to live in homes of better construction than the former labourers, and tended to operate small businesses, they all spoke of large debts and a large drop in quality of life since the end of SSM. Though their children all tended to have at least a high school education, some spoke of having to make the hard choice which of their children would receive a college education in lieu of dwindling funds. And beyond that, the fear for their children’s future was apparent as they were uncertain what opportunities even a college education would open to them.

In general what became of the smaller owners could be related to their class positions pre-SSM. A small number of the former small mine owners I interviewed were able to enter into ownership after years of work as mine labourers. For this group, having come from a poor peasant background mostly (according to my sample of interviews), rejoined this class and returned to agricultural labour (e.g. timuay Itim), or transitioned to other (far less profitable) SSM locations. In an example of the latter, one husband-wife team invested what remained of their economic capital into a rod mill near the original sitio Depore site that predated Balabag (interview July 2014). A mixed marriage between a Subanen and a Visayan,

they both came from poor peasant families. They spoke of their struggle to first set up a rod mill in Balabag and the frustration of having had to leave in heavy debt to the Six. After the demolition of the community they spent what remained of their savings, combined with the pawning of their luxury items, in an attempt to maintain the a portion of the success they had experienced. In the new site they operated a rod mill, a CIP plant, and a small (“sari-sari”) store. All together they estimated average monthly earnings of approximately Php5000 (compared to P175,000 a month average in Balabag). “Here in Depore the problem is the water, the tunnels flood easily due to our being at an even level with the river, so it costs a lot to pump this out of the tunnels.” While they succeeded in maintaining their class position by remaining mining capitalists, the low yield of the Depore site meant low profits which impacted their performance of class. Of their three children they could only afford to send one to college. They chose the second child, a male, over the first born female. They spoke of how it was very difficult to make the choice, but they felt that the male child would have a better opportunity to find work (as a seafarer) after graduation. They had hoped that this new rod mill would earn enough for the schooling, but it was under-performing. They worry they may not be able to afford it for much longer and that the son will have to take a break and find a job.

Other former small mine owners, like Ibon (first introduced in the chapter five), had come from a petit bourgeois family who had fallen on difficult times. For Ibon it was an electoral loss that drove them from their home community and damaged their economic and social capital. Ibon had made the risk to venture on his own and invest in SSM with what remained of his family savings and with financing help from the Magic Six. After the end of Balabag SSM he too tried to find a semblance of what he had lost by reinvesting in a rod mill in another part of Diplahan, but was becoming disheartened. The site, like that in Depore, had poor yields (“there’s not much there, we’re lucky to get two grams a week”). He also ran a small gold buying business and was one of the local buyers for the remaining low yield SSMs scattered around Diplahan and Bayog. They would sell this purchased gold to a larger regional gold buyer in the poblacion. They also had invested in a three hectares of land where they planted rubber and coconut trees but at the time of my interview they were still too young to harvest. Ibon estimates that in the month of our interview (July 2014) they will make a net income of Php5000.

Ibon lived in one of the bigger homes in his baragay, it was solidly built, two stories tall, and had a large kitchen area and multiple living spaces. Yet it was very much unfinished. Ibon spoke of how the funds simply ran out as they had only began building when the threat of TVIRDs takeover became closer

to reality¹²⁶. Hastily completed in concrete, it almost seemed as if the Ibon family were “squatters” in an unfinished home they discovered. The large kitchen had a fridge and stove, but Ibon told me that the stove was rarely used these days as they couldn’t afford to pay for gas, and the fridge usually wasn’t plugged in as they needed to conserve on their energy expenses. The entire first floor was almost unfurnished and the bare concrete made it feel cavernous. They had a makeshift wood burning kitchen set up outside that they used most of the time. Our interview was conducted on the second floor, which was the floor where it seemed they spent most of their time. It was comfortably furnished and had photos and colourful cloth covering the concrete walls. The photos were mostly of their five children, two of whom were currently in college (the other three in lower grades). Ibon spoke much about the expensiveness of schooling and their fears for their kids future. They were only able to afford the schooling of their two college aged children with help from their social network, but they were uncertain how long they could rely on this support. He was also thankful that for now, his financier in the Six had given him time to settle his affairs before asking for repayment of outstanding debts. The hope was that eventually the elder kids would find work abroad after graduation and thus be able to help with family debts and pay for their younger siblings college education—otherwise Ibon was unsure how their family would survive economically in the future.

The vast majority of these smaller owners began as middle peasants who operated plots of agricultural land or small business owners like the agricultural buyer-sellers, or owners of small to medium sized retail establishments in the municipal centres. These individuals tended to return to their original sources of income. Take for example “Arsy” who came from a small land owning Visayan family from a neighbouring province and held a college degree (interview July 2014). Her parents were farmers and had a small rice buying/selling business. Balabag allowed Arsy to grow that business but she also was saddled with debt to a financier in the Six. I also spoke with a Muslim former mine owner who had been the owner of a medium sized retail establishment in the poblacion before Balabag (interview July 2014). He returned to that business after 2012. He was already moderately successful before mining and so did not amass a large debt. He was able to reinvest earnings from his rod mill back into his retail business, but he felt that if CIP plant investment wasn’t discouraged he could have earned much more.

¹²⁶ The threat of an LSM takeover was ever-present since the late 1990s so it had become normalized. It wasn’t until the second decade of the 21st century when government support was more clearly shifting against MOSSMAs favour.

ANALYZING MOBILITY IN THE POST-SSM ERA

While in the previous chapter I focused on the class dynamics found within Balabag SSM (from the changes and developments in class position, process, performance, and politics), in this chapter on life after SSM I wanted to complement that analysis with a combination of participant observation and respondent reflections about their post-Balabag well-being. In the transition from an agrarian- to an extraction-based economy, many were able to see improvements (at least in the sense of increased earnings), but for the majority the economic gains were not carried over to their post-Balabag lives. The loss of artisanal mining operations had severe social impacts from the loss of funds for the education of their youth, to domestic problems, to the perception of increased social vices. With the loss of SSM the quality of life for many of the participants dropped. Health problems, once considered an acceptable trade-off for the better life chances mining provided, were now chronic issues that impacted their ability to earn even a subsistence living.

For the majority, the gains made in class position and economic capital during mining had come to an end and they were pushed to either return to their previous livelihoods, gamble on new SSM sites that could provide a ‘lucky strike’ (but more likely provided earnings similar or lower than agricultural work), or risk migrating to urban centres. Speaking in economic terms many returned to the class positions they originated from, but the class processes and class performances of their previous lives were not easily rewinded. Debts to financiers remained, and the classed consumption and embodiment’s of their former lives clashed with their new economic realities. Further, there was one group who lost more than their socioeconomic earnings and investments on Mt. Balabag, they lost Mt. Balabag itself—these were the original Subanen residents. After they were displaced from Balabag by the TVIRD takeover their community was scattered. Some went to other isolated Subanen upland communities, and others joined the settler communities in the municipalities of Bayog and Diplahan.

The small mine owners who came from petit bourgeoisie/middle peasant class positions previous to Balabag were mostly able to retain or even modestly grow the businesses/lands they previously operated. They retained their (pre-SSM) class position and tended to retain the classed performances associated with that position. So while they saw a significant loss of economic capital, their social and cultural capital remained relatively higher than the majority in the rural areas. This should be contrasted with small mine owners who came from labourer and/or indigenous backgrounds. For them post-Balabag life often meant a return to their pre-mining livelihoods, with three exceptions. First, there were those who sought labour work in other SSMs or in urban centres. Second, there was the one married couple

who continued as small mine owners¹²⁷ by investing in a new (and unprofitable) SSM site. And finally, there were the owners who were part of the original Subanen Balabag community. This group of labourers-turned-owners perceived the most significant negative impacts to their life chances and quality of life after the end of artisanal mining operations. These former poor peasants who became mine owners may have improved their economic capital and class positions during Balabag SSM, but their social and cultural capital did not increase to the same degree—which became more noticeable after their displacement. In their performance of class, which included the embodiment of culturally encoded markers, they were perceived, by others as well as themselves, as ‘poor’.

The major exception in post-mining outcomes, of course, was for the elite (the “Magic Six”) who not only saw their class positions rise during SSM, but were able to translate that to post-mining socioeconomic mobility. Previously to Balabag they were petit bourgeois/middle peasants with small landholdings and small agricultural businesses, after Balabag they were able to increase their land holdings and were able to join the regional bourgeoisie as medium to large business owners and/or large land owners. They saw an increase to their economic capital both in terms of direct liquid assets as well as the aforementioned investments, to their cultural capital in high educational attainment for their families, and to their social capital in joining the regional elite (with two of their number also achieving political office).

¹²⁷ There were stories of a few other small owners who similarly went on to a new site, but they tended to be former petit bourgeois individuals like Ibon and not former agricultural workers or indigenous people.

Chapter Seven: **CONCLUSION**

In 2007 I was exposed as an activist and journalist to the issues faced by former small-scale miners impacted by the large-scale mining of TVIRD (the Philippine subsidiary of Canada's TVI-Pacific). This experience became the inspiration for my field research in the summer of 2014 which was documented in this thesis. I conducted interviews and collected documents regarding socioeconomic mobility resulting from small-scale mining (SSM) on Mt. Balabag (Zamboanga del Sur, Mindanao). This work included inquiries to life before, during, and after the end of operations in the autumn of 2012, when TVIRD enforced their land claims and the mining community was displaced. I spoke to former mining community members about how their lives had been changed by SSM and how that experience impacted their post-mining lives. I wanted to discover how mining had impacted social mobility both during, and after, operations. My research asked: *What effect did SSM have on the production of class and capital accumulation? As the risk of a LSM takeover was always present (as the threat was there from the beginning of the SSM's existence and the events at Canatuan were well known), were the former miners able to make long term decisions to translate their socioeconomic gains from mining into post-mining socioeconomic mobility? Why or why not?*

I examined socioeconomic mobility through the relationship between class and different forms of capital. Class was analyzed through through Marxian terms (via the structure of land ownership and related productive assets) and via wider theorizations that intersect the economic with cultural and social factors. Using the framework of Philip Kelly's four dimensions of capital (position, process, performance, and politics) the improved economic potentials of Balabag SSM were related to Pierre Bourdieu's three types of capital (economic, social, and cultural) which posited that a distinction between financial flows and other axes of difference can provide analytically beneficial implications. Where in Marxian theory the ownership of economic capital is the prime determining factor for class identification, Bourdieu shows that other factors also play key roles in how class is performed and embodied. This can impact how relationships between class positions can also be processes that individuals choose to enter into. Further, these conceptions also help in the understanding of why individual interests can be multi-dimensional, or why the members of the same economic class position can have divergent interests and even create political groupings that seem to demonstrate intra-class struggle.

In this research I analyzed the changes in class position (and the related impacts to class processes, performance, and politics) that occurred in the transition from an agrarian- to an extraction-

based economy—and how these were carried over to post-SSM life. This was complemented with an analysis on how these changes impacted the perception of overall life chances (i.e. improved educational attainment, improved chances in acquiring stable above-subsistence livelihoods, etc.), and quality of life (i.e. cultural and health impacts). The economic aspects were stressed in chapter five (“Small-scale Mining in Balabag”), and the social and cultural aspects in chapter six (“Life After SSM”), though there was much overlap between the two.

The primary group that saw long term (post-mining) mobility were Balabag’s capitalist elite, who were given the title of the “Magic Six” by the SSM labourers. They were petit bourgeois middle peasants and their relatively advanced social connections, buttressed by the legitimacy conveyed by educational attainment, allowed them access to the fledgling Balabag SSM community. From there they used those same forms of capital to access low interest loans which allowed them to invest into mining equipment and labour when there were not yet other large investors on the scene. They created and led the Monte de Oro Small Scale Miners Association (MOSSMA), the mining organization that would control local SSM, and in time they became the new SSM elite. For the Six all three forms of capital rose during the Balabag SSM lifespan. Their positions of economic and political power (the latter coming from their leadership both of MOSSMA and the Balabag LGU) allowed them greater access to, and social connections with, the regional elite. They made investments in industries outside of Balabag and two of the six won positions of political power in the 2013 elections, with the third falling short by a narrow margin.

In comparison, the majority of those involved with SSM saw themselves return to their pre-mining class positions after the autumn of 2012. While some of the second tier mine owners were able to modestly invest outside of Balabag (mostly into small parcels of land under five hectares, into small agricultural businesses, and/or into new—and less productive—SSM sites) these tended to be those who already had small businesses or landholdings previously. The majority of the mine labourers returned to precarious and inconsistent agricultural labour, with some exceptions. This was a source of frustration for the majority as they reported socioeconomic mobility within SSM only to have it end with the LSM takeover.

Within this story was embedded the struggles of the local indigenous peoples, the Subanen. They were the first inhabitants of the peninsula and were the original inhabitants of Mt. Balabag before the arrival of SSM. Pre-mining the Subanen residents of Balabag engaged in kaingin (swidden) agriculture and though economically poor, they had relative food security and attempted to keep themselves separate from the migrant settlers who lived in the lowlands. The neoliberal era brought new waves of intrusion

into their lives, first under the guise of anti-insurgency in the 1980s and then mining in the 1990s. They¹ eventually came to represent the majority of the population involved with mining, but very few came to fill mine ownership positions within the class position structure. Entering SSM with low levels of all three forms of capital they faced both discrimination and economic marginalization, and the long term impact of SSM on them was the most generally negative of all my respondents. In viewing this through the class-as-performance lens of Kelly's multi-dimensional class framework, their ethnicity can be seen as a form of embodied cultural capital. The Subanen were viewed as less capable by settlers by virtue of their being indigenous (especially in the early stages of Balabag SSM development), and though with time they were able to gain social capital within the community, the perceptions of difference meant that they had more obstacles relative to settlers who began from similar class positions. The original Subanen residents of Balabag also experienced the harshest effects of displacement as unlike the settlers they had no 'home' to return to and so were doubly displaced.

In general however my interviews with the small-scale miners of Balabag painted a relatively positive picture of economic growth (at least in terms of income). During the SSM era most of those involved did see a significant increase in earnings, and some labourers were able to improve their class positions to become small mine owners. Former small land owners turned small miners were able to see greater earnings and eventually won a significant victory (in the final years of SSM operations) over the elite so as to weaken their control over the most profitable means of production. Yet the majority of these individuals, perhaps due to not having had enough time to accumulate the capital to spread beyond Balabag and/or SSM, were unable to significantly strategize for post-mining life. Their socioeconomic mobility was tied to SSM, and when the end came in late 2012 so too did the improvements it provided them. And for the majority of the labourers, the end of artisanal operations meant a full return to their difficult pre-mining agricultural livelihoods—though they brought with them the baggage of having once known relative economic security. Thus the majority, despite the knowledge that a LSM takeover was an ever-present threat, were unable to strategize successfully for life post-mining.

Of the few that did see some improvement, these can be split into two groups:

- 1) A very small number, primarily the Balabag elite known as the "Magic Six," were able to translate their involvement in SSM into post-mining upward class mobility, and into non-mining related business investments that continued to see benefits for their families post-2012 (as discussed above). In terms of class performance, their outward displays of class mobility were seen, for example, in

¹²⁸ "They" in this case referring to Subanen in general, not just those originating from Balabag.

their forms of consumption (e.g. large lavish homes and expensive cars), which were recognized even by other former Balabag miners as signs of their ‘rags to riches’ stories.

- 2) A slightly larger, but still small relative to the total, group of smaller mine owners who did not see post-mining improvements in class position but were able to make small investments outside Balabag SSM. Like those in the Six, before Balabag they had been small landowners and/or owners of small businesses, but contrary to the Six they left mining with only moderately increased investments. The TVIRD takeover came at a time soon after the small mine owners victory over elite control over productive investment. This resulted in the significant economic losses. Despite having been mine owners, their classed relationships to the elite were always subservient and post-mining many of these individuals continued to be in heavy debt to the them. Their classed consumption suffered a decline post-2012 which led to their perception of downward mobility. An example could be seen in their relatively modern homes, built during the SSM era, that they could no longer maintain¹²⁹ at the same level. There is a question left dangling in this analysis that this research cannot answer: had their late investments into highly profitable CIP Plants come sooner, or the entry of LSM come later, would their post-SSM lives have followed a similar path as the elites?

The positive (though for most short-lived) aspects of Balabag SSM also came paired with negative elements:

- 1) **The impact to environmental and human health:** SSM, being mostly unregulated, was conducted with the goal of immediate profits. Safety regulations and equipment were often sub-par and/or non-existent. Miners themselves reported that waste disposal procedures were not optimal and probably impacted human health. Long term environmental health was not a priority. The effect on the environment was especially a concern for the Subanen residents of Balabag who saw the site as their community and who still held out hope of a return. Both these impacts had a direct effect on their long term life chances and quality of life.
- 2) **The exploitation of the indigenous Subanen:** Previous to the arrival of SSM Mt. Balabag had been home to a small community of Subanen. While this land (and most of Zamboanga Peninsula) had been part of the ancestral domain of these indigenous people, they only came to reside on the mountain after the arrival of Filipino settlers to the lowlands of Diplahan and Bayog pushed them upland starting in the 1960s. Despite this, and despite being the initial discoverers of gold deposits on the mountain, the Subanen saw only tacit recognition of their rights. The 1999 FPIC document with

¹²⁹ This could be seen in the presence of appliances (e.g. stoves, refrigerators, and other electronic devices) that were unused due to the lack of funds to pay electrical bills.

MOSSMA was perceived to only benefit Subanen leaders who hadn't resided on Balabag. The community believed that their rights were not respected and that only their estranged leaders benefitted. Reports by many Subanen interviewees of racist discrimination within SSM employment can be seen as an example of classed embodiment.

- 3) **Despite an increase in income, educational attainment remained low:** The reality of poor educational attainment for the majority, especially within the families of labourers, demonstrate that a direct link between economic capital and education is problematic. Other factors, such as the value of schooling in improving life chances in a region dominated by semi-feudal agriculture need to be examined. Most respondents spoke highly of their desire to see their children educated, and of how SSM allowed them the funds to send their children to school. However, in my interviews I discovered that many youth chose to drop out of school in their high school years in order to join the SSM workforce. They did so because they saw mining incomes as greater than what they could find elsewhere and it did not require a diploma or a degree. College attendance remained extremely low during the SSM era, except for those from settler¹³⁰ petit bourgeois/middle peasant backgrounds previous to SSM. However, even in this latter group a college education was not universal.
- 4) **The lack of incentive and opportunity for productive investment:** For much of the lifespan of Balabag SSM the mining elite attempted to limit ownership of mining capital (modelled upon the semi-feudal agricultural system). This limit, matched with increasing economic capital within the community, had effects on the way earnings were spent, with many labourers focusing on the perceived "good life" of classed performances via consumption. The tight control on productive investment by the elite eventually resulted in intra-class fragmentation. A form of class-as-politics emerged within the small mine owners to break the hold of the elite over the most profitable investments (especially regarding the ownership of CIP plants) which led to the relaxation of MOSSMA regulations in 2009. Overall, the class processes of Balbag SSM maintained a division between financier and financed, and this kept labourers and small mine owners alike tied to the elite resulting in obligations of debt and profit sharing.
- 5) **The development of a 'gold rush' masculinist culture:** Balabag was a 'gold rush' site where individuals from other communities congregated to earn a livelihood. As such, it was a community predominantly of men who left their families in their home communities in the lowlands during the period in which they worked (the main exception here were the original Subanen residents). This helped create a hyper-masculinist culture that amplified the already "macho" culture found in the Philippines. Drinking, gambling, drug use, and womanizing were normalized part of their routines as

¹³⁰ None of my Subanen interviewees, even those who were small mine owners, had children that reached the college level. Here again the embodied nature of their "Subanen-ness" seem to play a role in how they navigate classed performance.

reported to me. These issues can also be seen as having some basis in the lack of incentive and opportunity for productive investment during the majority of the SSM era. This masculinist culture also resulted in reports of household difficulties after the end of Balabag mining, seen in domestic conflicts over money, as well as in direct violence against women.

- 6) **Problems with peace and order:** Reports of intra-community violence in the rush to maximize personal profits were also shared during my fieldwork. Unsystematic mining methods and cultural differences helped fuel distrust. This was further compounded by the lack of community solidarity found in a 'gold rush' site which puts groups of male strangers in competition with each other. Here the known threat of a TVIRD takeover may also have added a temporal pressure to maximize earnings in as short a timeframe as possible, but this is only speculation.

It is interesting to note that the negative social consequences within this SSM community are comparable to results found in LSM around the world. From the weakening of familial bonds, to anxiety depression, social vices (like alcoholism and gambling) and other 'high-risk' activities (Donoghue 2004; Gibson and Klinck 2009; McLean 2012; Sharma and Rees 2007), and increased gender inequity and gender specific issues (e.g. prostitution, domestic violence, etc.) resulting from the growth of 'macho' culture (Ahmad & Lahiri-dutt 2006; Bhanumathi 2002; Carreon 2009; Gibson and Klinck 2009; Sharma and Rees 2007), turmoil has been shown to follow foreign LSM. For example, in her work with the Mayan-Mam of Guatemala, Suzana Caxaj (2014) discusses the *social unravelling* within mining sites, not just in her field sites but as seen in other literature. She refers to this as a *climate of fear and discord*, as seen in *embodied expressions of distress*. By the former she was referring to deeply divided views on the mining company resulting in divisions in the once collective unity of the community. These experiences of distress were physically, emotionally, and spiritually embodied and resulted in overlapping symptom clusters much like the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (2014:54). Her work also noted that poor health resulting from mine labour, environmental contamination, and/or economic degradation was an additional area of study that needs further attention, with the work that has already been done strongly hinting at how this negatively affects mining communities (2014:51). With the former miners of Balabag, all the above was discovered to be present even before the claiming of the SSM land by the Canadian transnational corporation. This points to causes that go beyond TNCs alone, and suggests a more systemic problem related to the nature of extractive industries within the logic of capitalism itself.

After SSM in Balabag ended these negatives continued to have effects and ramifications. Health issues continued and potentially could be further aggravated due to the loss of income needed for treatment. The impacts on family life were noted as well as the loss of livelihoods combined with the effects of the masculinist SSM culture. Respondents noted how this made women and children especially

vulnerable, as seen in reports of increased domestic abuse. This may also have informed why many of the former miners had reportedly turned to increased social vices relative to pre-mining levels as an escape¹³¹. For the Balabag Subanen, the complete loss of their lands and community show elements of the ‘resettlement effect’ as noted in the mining-induced displacement literature. These include “multi-dimensional impoverishment, the loss of homes, communities, productive land, income-earning assets, subsistence, community-shared resources, and cultural sites (Downing 2007:1).” And even for the other members of the community who never called Balabag ‘home’ some elements of this effect could be seen as hinting at how important economic factors were to these displacement effects.

The benefits seen in this SSM site also raised many questions about gold rush SSM (in Balabag and in general) that this research is unable to answer. I pose them here as a challenge to future research. What would have been the long term socioeconomic impacts in a similar site where an LSM had not succeeded in claiming a high yield small-scale mine, and/or where the SSM association had been successful in securing a legal permit? And how many of the changes seen in the latter years of artisanal mining were due to the outside influences outlined in this thesis? It was the case that while operational the majority did report an increase in at least their economic capital in comparison to that seen in the agricultural sector that dominates the region. And it was the case that some did see, and more were beginning to see, some level of socioeconomic mobility, with even some former mine labourers becoming small mine owners. The class politics of small mine owners had begun to win victories against the elite and the structure based on semi-feudal agricultural production was breaking down. But to what extent was this shift the result of rising fortunes by the increasingly wealthy small owners and miners? And how much was it informed by the ticking clock of LSM dispossession? Did the TVIRD threat influence the elite’s decisions to relax regulations for the purpose of maximizing short term gains at the expense of their control of production?

The changes in 2009 to 2010 allowed greater productive investment within SSM by other members of the community (beyond the Magic Six) that created significant incentives to investment which did not exist previously. This resulted in a spike in lending by smaller owners and relatively wealthy labourers from financiers within the Six. Had TVIRD not entered just under three years later would the path to greater long term socioeconomic mobility have been laid? In contrast, what if the restrictions to productive investment not been relaxed? If not for the spike in SSM investment in these latter years the level of post-mining debt would probably have been lower. How would this have changed

¹³¹ Though this may also be a case of how memory narratives were employed a means of making sense of their present through a comparison with a more tranquil past.

post-mining outcomes? This work on Balabag SSM poses more questions than answers and reflects the need for further research.

In contrast to my research, the literature I reviewed on small-scale mining worldwide tended to have a more positive outlook (Jennings 1999; Hentschel et al 2002; Peluso 2015; Villegas et al 2012). For example, Nancy Lee Peluso's article on a 'gold rush' style small-scale mine in Indonesian Borneo (2015) saw benefits resulting from locally controlled mining while recognizing some of the dangers.

Small-scale illegal mining in West Kalimantan is dangerous to human and environmental health. It's also a shot at economic independence for marginalised rural people (Peluso 2015).

While my research did see similar benefits, I also discovered that few of those lived beyond the SSM era. The end of artisanal mining saw a return for most to pre-mining standards. Other researchers into Philippine SSM also found that in general,

...the fact [is] that the living conditions of the vast number of small-scale miners, who have long been contributing significantly to the country's economy, have not improved. And just like the rest of the peasantry, small-scale miners also remain in exploitative social and economic relations with the financiers, middlemen and large-scale mining corporations (Rey and Saturay 2005:21).

How much can the differences seen between Peluso and myself be the result of the different histories of Kalimantan and the Zamboanga Peninsula? The contrasts in our work could be used to highlight how the different forms capitalism can take in different places can have significantly different effects on how extractive gains are controlled and distributed. For example she indicates that Kalimantan miners also had access to agricultural land, whereas in my site (as with most of the Philippines) there was little agricultural land not already owned by large landlord families. The countryside's semi-feudal system in turn, helped inform the way extractive production was systematized in my research site, which could possibly account for further differences in our research.

Extraction is also by definition a short term industry. The minerals will eventually run dry and its environmental and human effects will linger beyond that end. So if it is the case that 'gold rush' artisanal mining's benefits are tied to the existence of that mine can this industry alone be a path to long term economic independence? In other words, can this be a sustainable path to development? In looking to

successful places where development began with a gold rush the connection between the local and state scales can be seen. In describing California Richard Walker (2010) writes,

the secret of California's success is to be found in its social relations of production, especially open property rights and a syncretic class system, rapid capital accumulation, and a redoubtable state based firmly on the capitalist society that crafted it. (Walker 2010:167)

In contrast to gold-rush California which existed within a core state, Zamboanga Peninsula exists within a neo-colonial peripheral. The Philippines remains governed mostly by political dynasties (Simbulan 2012) whose family power comes from the semi-feudal system in which benefits from their position as 'middle men' facilitates the transfer of economic capital from the periphery to core. As large landowning families who derive the majority of their profit and power from the extraction of rent, they had little incentive to reinvest their earnings into greater productive capacity: "rather than reinvesting to raise farm productivity, most landlords behaved as 'rent capitalists'" (Krinks 2002:104). Thus in the rural areas like that surrounding Mt. Balabag socioeconomic opportunities remained poor for the majority, which was in great part what made mining so attractive.

Since the Philippines was granted formal independence by the United States after World War Two it has played the role of peripheral state within the global capitalist economy. Core states, like Canada, have found value in extracting raw materials and cheap labour in this relationship and in the neoliberal era that has extended into mining. However, this was not purely the top-down relationship as portrayed in orthodox globalization discourse. The global scale does not dictate actions on the local scale. If it did LSM would dominate without opposition. The fact that SSM exists in myriad forms (generally put into the broad categories of 'traditional' and 'gold rush') displays the power local people can wield. The development of local mining in Zamboanga peninsula, a region with no history of mining before the twentieth century (and no SSM until the neoliberal era), was testament to agency on the local scale. The scales should not be viewed as independent but as nested within each other, the global affected the local and vice versa. The profitability of the extractive industries in relatively remote areas provided what Harvey called a 'spatial fix' to the crises of global capitalism. This interest in mining, and the spike in gold prices, also created new possibilities for the people of mineral-rich Zamboanga peninsula to act upon this opening.

In contrast to the globalization discourse that privileged economic neocolonialism via transnational corporations, local entrepreneurs sought a form of economic nationalism through SSM.

According to MOSSMA mining would improve the lives of the local people who engaged in the activity. In my research the former miners unanimously agreed that SSM did at least improve their economic capital. In a region that lacked large domestic industry, and dominated by a semi-feudal agricultural economy, the earnings found in mining were a significant improvement. Unfortunately, with state support behind LSM and with most of benefits found within SSM seemingly tied to its lifespan, the question of long term socioeconomic mobility for local peoples remain problematic.

Considering the vast mineral wealth of the Philippines it seems that the potential is there for a better way to create local development through extraction, but the current choices between foreign large-scale mining and poorly regulated local small-scale mining (that is virtually unsupported by the state) are both problematic. Any long term development strategy will require a more integrated approach that focuses on creating overall greater opportunities beyond mining. As my study on SSM shows, the benefits of a single industry are precarious and depend too much on that industry's continued existence. This points to an even greater problem within the Philippines that goes much beyond the scope of this research, the general problem of an overall lack of both job and investment opportunities. The development of industrialization both in support of, and as an alternative to, mining can help incentivize the productive investment of all forms of capital.

In their analysis of SSM AGHAM writes:

The character of the small-scale mining in the Philippines is a clear reflection of the neocolonial and semi-feudal character of the country's economy and society – an age-old livelihood source and tradition, forced to integrate into the cash economy and the export-orientation of the whole mining industry (Rey and Saturay 2005:21).

When I arrived in the summer of 2014 to conduct my research I discovered that the benefits of small-scale mining were much more ambiguous than they first appeared. It was reported by former miners that the industry gave them a “future,” but just two years after displacement few were able to show long term socioeconomic mobility beyond their pre-Balabag levels. It seemed that artisanal mining was a fragile economic bubble that once popped returned most to their pre-mining lives and left little long term developmental benefits for the rural communities from which the extraction was done. Add to this the negative effects to human and environmental health, and the harmful post-SSM impacts to cultures and communities, and the short term benefits become more difficult to justify. The experience of this research, from the fieldwork to the writing, has been a difficult process, one that left me with questions and

uncertainties. It is my hope that these queries will help drive the need for further work, and that hopefully one day something positive will come from the hardships faced by the peoples in sites like Balabag.

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APPENDIX: Sample Questions

****note:** I did not always have a lot of time when conducting some interviews, so I did not always follow this list step by step. To complete this interview in full required at least half an hour, and an in-depth interview could last beyond one hour. For the most part I used this as a guide and asked questions based on the highlighted (in bold) themes. Further, I would ask many follow-up questions based on their answers and/or ask questions based on the answers of others. For example, while there is no direct question here about social vices in asking about community problems I would follow up with a query like: “Some respondents have told me that there were some problems with drug use, why do you think that was?” I would never ask them about themselves, their families, or friends in connection with these problems, as I knew this would not elicit a favourable response.*

General Personal Data:

sex:

age:

ethnicity:

married?

children (number and ages)?

Education level attained:

Yours:

Your children:

Your future aspirations as a child:

Your future aspirations for your children:

Where did/do you live:

Before SSM:

During SSM:

After SSM:

Before SSM:

- Your parents livelihood:
- Your livelihood?
- Describe the work:
- Monthly earnings?

During SSM:

- Why did you choose to work in Balabag?
- Take me through the different jobs you did. Describe the work.
- How much money did you earn/compare to pre-Balabag?
- How much money was left over at the end of the month?
- How did you spend your earnings? (on yourself, on your family, on investments, etc.)
- Did you invest in mining? Describe the investment
- Where did you get the money to invest?
- Were you happy with the work?
- What were the biggest problems/worries you had/your community had? Why?
- What were the biggest problems/worries your spouse had? Why?
- If you could do it again would you? what would you change? Why?
- Who were the most successful people in Balabag, why?
- Why do you think Balabag SSM was shut down by the government?

How long did you work/live in Balabag before displacement?

- Did you live there with your family?
- If not where did your family live?
- Why didn't they come with you?
- When did you leave Balabag? Why?

How did you strategize your relocation after displacement?

- Did the company help? or pay for your land?

After SSM:

- Compare life then and now?
- Livelihood?
- Describe the work:
- Monthly earnings?
- What are the biggest problems/worries you have/your community has? Why?
- What are the biggest problems/worries your spouse has? Why?

* * *

FOR ORIGINAL SUBANEN RESIDENTS:

- What can you share about the history of the Subanen on Balabag?
- Describe life before SSM:
- Describe how SSM began:
- What was the relationship with the settlers like? Before/during/after SSM?
- How did you feel about SSM at first? Later? Now?
- Do you think the Subanen benefitted from SSM?

* * *

***note:** *The below are additional specialized questions directed as specific individuals:*

FOR MOSSMA OFFICIALS:

- Can you share the history of Balabag SSM?
- What was the role of MOSSMA?
- How many people worked/lived there?
- Can you describe the different roles within SSM?
- Can you share some of MOSSMA's successes and failures? What would you do differently?
- How do you respond to the criticisms about Balabag SSM?

* * *

THE MAGIC SIX

- I have been told that you are one of the great success stories in Balabag, the people greatly respect you. Can you share your story? How has your life changed?
- What were your key roles in the community?
- Can you describe the relationships between the different roles?
- Can you share other success stories?
- What prevented others from reaching success?
- How do you respond to the criticisms about Balabag SSM?

* * *

OTHER MINE OWNERS

- I have been told that you are one of the great success stories in Balabag, the people greatly respect you. Can you share your story? How has your life changed?

- Can you share other success stories?
- What prevented others from reaching success?
- Do you feel that you reached the full potential of success in Balabag? Why?
- What prevented that/what obstacles existed?
- If you were in charge of MOSSMA what would you have done differently?
- How do you respond to the criticisms about Balabag SSM?